

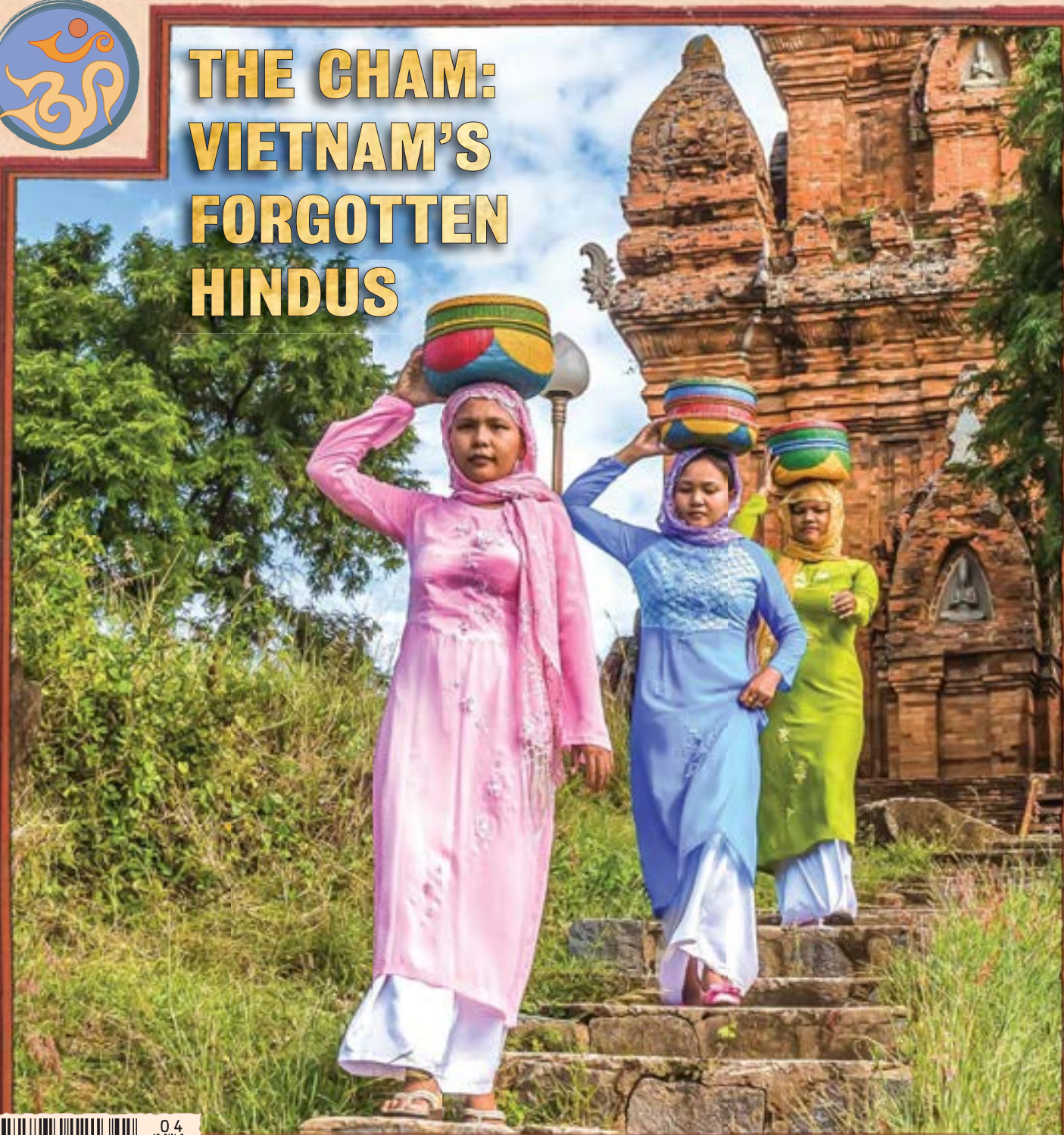
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# HINDUISM TODAY

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



## THE CHAM: VIETNAM'S FORGOTTEN HINDUS



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COVER: Cham devotees carrying offerings at one of Vietnam's ancient temples; (above) A painting from 1823, depicts the three aspects of Realization of the Absolute and is displayed in the Smithsonian exhibition, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, in Washington DC

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# Malaysia's Waterfall Temple

*Volunteers pose before the Sri Baladandayuthapani Temple on Penang island, celebrating the completion of Lord Muruga's newest abode, a holy pilgrimage site with a remarkable history. Article begins on page 20.*





# GLOBAL DHARMA

INDIA

## Nataraja's Priests Persevere

ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 6, 2014, India's Supreme Court handed down its ruling for the management of the ancient Nataraja temple in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu. A 2009 Madras High Court decision had put the management in State hands. On appeal, the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the Podu Dikshitar, the hereditary priesthood who have managed the temple for over 2,000 years. The verdict was widely celebrated, as state control of temples—particularly one so revered—is a disputed issue.

Back in 1951, India passed a revised Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act (HR&CE) which permits state governments to assume control over any Hindu temple deemed by them to be in need of such oversight. It allows management of just about everything, from finances and priests to properties and pujas. Tamil Nadu's HR&CE department currently manages more than 36,000 temples throughout the state.

In the 2009 court case, which had removed the Podu

Dikshitar from their long-standing position, the HR&CE department contended that the temple was being mismanaged—an unproven charge. The State also claimed that the Dikshitar were not a legitimate religious organization, an official classification that had protected their authority under India's constitution ever since a 1952 Supreme Court ruling. The 2009 decision, by the lower court, favored the State, which then took management of the temple, installed donation boxes and attempted to regulate the temple finances. An appeal of the 2009 decision would reach India's Supreme Court just a few years later.

Late last year, that court's justices accepted the appeal filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy on behalf of the Podu Dikshitar against the 2009 Madras High Court verdict. Dr. Subramanian Swamy argued that the right of the Dikshitar to manage the temple could not be taken away by the government. He said any claims of financial impropriety could be dealt with under existing law without taking over the



**A holy sight:** Chidambaram Nataraja temple west tower at sunrise

temple's management.

The justices agreed, and ruled that the case, regarding the Dikshitar's right to manage the temple affairs, recognized by the Supreme Court in 1952, should not have been reopened—let alone repealed—by the lower Madras Court.

Unlike the US, India's constitution does not rigidly separate church and state. In theory, the idea is equal state treatment of all religions; but in practice, only

Hindu institutions are subject to government control. In some cases, wealthy state-run temples receive only a part of their donations, with the rest going to secular government coffers. Such a situation might put some devotees on edge, not knowing if their donations to the temple will go to the Deity or to the state.

This landmark case could pave the way for reversing HR&CE-enacted control over other temples.

NORWAY

## Meatless Mondays

ACCORDING TO A NOVEMBER article by *Agence France Presse*, the Norwegian military has announced "Meatless Mondays" in an attempt to lessen the environmental impact of meat consumption. As the name suggests, the military will observe a completely vegetarian menu one day a week, though not necessarily on Mondays.

The program has already been introduced to one of Norway's main bases and is to be implemented throughout the Norwegian army over the next year. Estimates are that the program will cut some 330,000 pounds

of meat from the army's annual diet. The plan is being praised by a local environmental organization which hopes once-a-week veggies will spread nationwide. Local army spokesman Eystein Kvarving told *AFP*, "It's not about saving money, it's about being more concerned for our climate, more ecologically friendly and also healthier."

Pal Stenberg, a nutritionist and navy commander who heads up the army's catering division—in charge of feeding 10,000 Norwegian troops 35,000 meals per day—said the soldiers have generally responded well.



**Good for you:** Soldiers Toblas Kvammen and Kenneth Marken join fellow soldiers for the weekly vegetarian meal

CAMBODIA

## Repatriating Stolen Statues

IN AN AGREEMENT SIGNED DECEMBER, 2013, an ancient statue of a Hindu warrior looted from a temple in Cambodia will be returned to the country. The 10th-century carving is valued at over \$2 million.

According to *The New York Times*, Sotheby's auction house had come into possession of the statue, but denied any knowledge of its having been stolen.

During the 1970 civil war, many of Cambodia's precious artifacts disappeared, particularly those from the Koh Ker Hindu temple complex in the North. Many of these artifacts eventually found their way to American museums. Just last year the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York returned two similar sandstone statues known as the Kneeling Attendants, pieces clearly related to the Hindu warrior in style.

US attorney Preet Bharara has affirmed, "The United States is not a market for antiquities stolen from other nations, and we will continue to track down and return any that are brought here illegally." US officials are presently assisting Cambodia in the search for its many missing artifacts.



**The Hindu warrior:** The most recent of the Koh Ker temple's sandstone statues to be returned to Cambodia



**Teaching culture:** One of the creative Balinese games teaches how to make the traditional religious offering called canang

BALI

## Technology Helping Tradition

DECEMBER 12 THROUGH 15, 2013, saw the first observance of a new IT festival in Bali. According to *The Jakarta Post*, the Denpasar Technology, Information and Communication Festival included seminars, workshops, entertainment and competitions for blogging and animation.

Among the many innovators were more than a few university students who had created culturally-based video games

and applications. Many of their ideas were aimed at preserving Balinese culture through an evolving technological age. Their creations include games about Balinese classic masks, folklore and the making of temple offerings.

For one free, Android-based game, visit: [bit.ly/dkala](http://bit.ly/dkala). You can also check out another student's tutorial to learn Balinese at [Ba-saBali.org](http://Ba-saBali.org). What a fun way to keep culture alive!

USA

## Ticket, Bags, Security... Yoga?

A NEW AMENITY IS EMERGING at airports across the US—the yoga and meditation room. It started in Terminal 2 at San Francisco International, an apt point of origin, given yoga's popularity in the Bay Area. The idea is to give stressed travellers an oasis in which to relax and find their inner quiet.

Passengers can now take a break from the rush of travel at similar rooms across the country. They've opened already in the international airports at Burlington, Dallas-Fort Worth, Albuquerque, Raleigh-Durham and

Chicago O'Hare, with others in the planning stages.

According to an article in [today.com](http://today.com), O'Hare's Terminal 3 yoga room is relatively small and features a bamboo wood floor, tall mirrors on one wall and exercise mats.

Debby McElroy of Airports Council International-North America told the *New York Daily News* in 2012, "I expect other airports will be looking at whether a yoga room at their airport makes sense." So next time you fly, keep a lookout for a chance to look in.



**Sign me up:** San Francisco International Airport officials had the fun of designing the new yoga icon, unable to find any existing logo in the international guide of airport pictograms



## Hinduism's Biological Benefits

SEVERAL RECENT SCIENTIFIC studies have delved into some of the meditative and worshipful practices found in Hinduism. The studies have produced fascinating medical findings about the rewards of these practices when regularly performed, adding to the long list of benefits of living a religious life.

Lord Ganesha is always a good place to start. A recent study conducted by Yale neurobiologist Dr. Eugenius Ang shows that an age-old greeting to Ganesha,



**Healthy mind, happy life:** Touted as “Super Brain Yoga,” *Thoppukaranam* is now being taught to children in the United States to mitigate mental disorders and behavioral problems.

*thoppukaranam*, as it is known in Tamil, has been proven to synchronize the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Ang used EEG readings to measure the brain's neuron firings, which were found to become fully lateralized after five minutes of the practice.

This ancient Hindu technique (touted now as “new”) involves squeezing your right earlobe with the thumb and forefinger of your left hand, then crossing your right hand over to grasp the other. You then bob your body up and down before Ganesha, breathing in as you go down and out as you rise. This is commonly prescribed by teachers in India for unruly behavior in classrooms, and scientific studies have now shown it effectively creates mental balance. Children with autism, attention deficit disorder and other behavioral problems have been shown to benefit from the practice.

A recent [yalescientific.org](http://yalescientific.org) article reports another study, led by Dr. Judson Brewer of the Yale School of Medicine, which found undeniable functional changes in the brains of experienced

meditators. Brewer used fMRI scanning to measure levels of concentrated oxygen in the brain—correlating to brain activity. The study showed that compared with non-meditators, those who meditated regularly had altered neural connections. The most prominently noted was an unexpected bridging of two different brain regions, both crucial for cognitive control. To Brewer's surprise, this co-activation persisted during non-meditative periods, showing that with regular practice, the brain reforms itself deeper and deeper into a constant meditative state.

A 2012 study by Nobel Prize winner Elizabeth Blackburn and other scientists at the University of California found that just twelve minutes of daily meditation over a period of eight weeks increased telomerase activity by 43 percent. Responsible for chromosomal upkeep, the telomerase enzyme is crucial for a cell's longevity, and therefore that of your body.

These are just a few of the

many intriguing studies creating a strong bridge between the scientific community and the wisdom of the ancient past.



**God of memory and reason:** Millions worship Lord Ganesha every day, performing *Thoppukaranam* in adoration—an act which now proves to enhance and balance the mind

## BRIEFLY...

**A FIVE-DAY WORKSHOP FOR HINDU** priests was held in Nadi, Fiji, in December, 2013. According to the *Fiji Times*, the classes, open to Nadi priests and the public, helped to improve and standardize their ritual knowledge. Dr. Meenakshi and Dr. Acharya Sharma, founders of the Sydney Sanskrit School, came to teach the workshop, which was organized by Yaadein Vision Australia.

**THE CITY COUNCIL OF ADEJE** on Tenerife in the Canary Islands has recently approved the transfer of several acres of government land to the Hindu Cultural Center, free of charge.

The Cultural Center's plan is to use the land for the building of a temple and, according to one community leader, “to give a place for our children to meet and make sure they don't lose their culture.”

**NEW RULES HAVE BEEN** implemented at Batu Caves, the famous Malaysian pilgrimage site. Kavadi, the penance offered to Lord Murugan, is often accompanied by body piercings with small silver spears or hooks. In recent years many devotees have strayed from traditional standards, some flouting advertizing on their spears or hanging unconventional items

from their piercings. Under the new rules, devotees cannot carry fancy kavadis bearing logos of their associations, favorite soccer clubs, movie stars and uncommon fruits and other non-traditional items. Visitors must refrain from wearing short pants or skirts, running at the premises, bringing pets, smoking and spitting. Those who do not follow the standards will not be allowed inside the temple.

**ACCORDING NEW ZEALAND'S 2013** census, the Indian population has risen 48 percent since 2006, to 155,000 today, making it the second largest Asian ethnic group in the country. Census General Manager Sarah Minson stated, “It's interesting to note that there are more ethnicities in New Zealand than there are countries in the world.”

**IN THE INDIAN STATE OF JAMMU** and Kashmir, 550,000 trees have been planted at Trikuta Hills. The area houses the cave shrine of Mata Vaishnodevi, a popular pilgrimage site. The planting, which has continued over the last four years, is an effort to preserve the environment and make the area greener, especially along the heavily traveled route to the shrine.

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and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



*Founder:*  
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

*Publisher:*  
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*Editor-in-Chief:*  
Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami

*Publisher's Aide:* Paramacharya Sivanatha Ceyonswami

*Deputy Editor:* Acharya Kumarnathaswami

*Managing Editor:* Acharya Arumuganathaswami

*Production Manager:* Sannyasin Brahmanathaswami

*Subscription and Distribution Manager:*

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*Advertising Manager:* Yogi Jothinatha

*Correspondents:* Rajiv Malik, Prabha Prabhakar

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Chamundi Sabanathan. *HPI Staff:* Chandra San-

kara. *Sanskritist:* Dr. P. Jayaraman. *Consultants:* Dr. S.P.

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## IN MY OPINION

# Unlocking the Past

## How Sanskrit reconnected me with my ancient and profound cultural heritage

BY AATISH TASEER

I GREW UP IN INDIA, WHERE a cultural and linguistic break had occurred. Between my grandparents' and my parents' generation there lay an impervious layer of English education that prevented them from being able to reach their roots. As the brilliant Sri Lankan art critic Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy had written, “It is hard to realize how completely the continuity of Indian life has been severed. A single generation of English education suffices to break the threads of tradition and to create a non-descript and superficial being deprived of all roots—a sort of intellectual pariah who does not belong to the East or the West.”

What Coomaraswamy's understanding meant for me was that the literary past of India was locked. I could go back no further than fifty or sixty years. The work of writers who had come before me—who had lived and worked in the places where I am today—was beyond reach. Their ideas of beauty, their feelings for the natural world, their notion of what literature was—all closed.

I therefore knew nothing about the shared origins of Indo-European languages when I first began to study Sanskrit at Oxford. I quickly became completely absorbed in learning of this shared genesis of languages and of its decay, to which no direct record remains.

I would marvel at how the Sanskrit *vid*, from where we have *vidiā*, was related to the Latin *videre*—to see—from where, in turn, we have such words as video and vision; *veda*, too, of course. Or that *kāla*—time and death—should be derived from the Sanskrit *kāl*—to calculate or enumerate—which related to the Latin *kalendarium*—“account book,” and the English *calendar*. It imparted to me the suggestive notion that at the end of all our calculations comes death. Almost as if *kāla* did not simply mean time, but had built into it the idea of time's pas-



sage, the counting of our days.

The little knowledge of Sanskrit I'd gained made the walls speak, and nothing was the same again. For me, Sanskrit laid bare the deep tissue of language. Words and names that had once seemed simple dissolved into their elements. *Ksitaja*, which meant “born of the earth,” could be applied equally to an insect and a worm as well as the horizon, for they are all earth-born. And *dvija*, twice born, could

mean a Brahmin, for he is born, and then born again when initiated; it could mean a bird, who is born once when conceived and then again from an egg; and it could also mean “tooth,” for teeth, it was plain to see, had two lives.

No ancient culture thought harder about language than India; no culture had better means to assess it. Nothing in old India went un-analyzed; no part of speech was just a part of life. No word just slipped into usage and could not be accounted for. This was the land of grammarians. And if today, in that same country, men were without grammar, without means to assess language, it would speak of a decay to be measured against the standards of India's own past.

That decay lay behind my excitement at discovering my linguistic and cultural roots and glimpsing an underlying wholeness, a dream of unity that we humans can never quite let go of. In India, where recent history has heaped confusion upon confusion, where everything seems shoddy, haphazard and unplanned, the structure of Sanskrit, with its exquisite perfection, is proof that it has not always been that way. Sanskrit is like a little molecule of the Indian genius, intact and saved in amber, for a country whose memory of it has departed.

AATISH TASEER, 33, is a British-born writer, journalist, and contributes to many publications, including Time Magazine, Prospect, Esquire and others.



# Hinduism: the Original Humanism

A critical examination of secular humanism and Hindu humanism for youth immersed in the academic atheism of college

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

**M**ODERN UNIVERSITIES ARE MOLDING the minds of our youth in ways parents might not expect. This is because reason and science dominate the learning at higher institutions, pushing religion to the side, an understandable but limiting academic strategy. Even if a professor has strong personal religious convictions, the rules of the institution (with the notable exception of religious universities) do not allow him or her to share these beliefs, or their intellectual implications, with students. The result: the atheistic/agnostic values of secular humanism have been enshrined as the default icons of mainstream education.

Many Hindu youths leave home for college as good Hindus but, after studying the typical subjects through an anti-religious bias, come back doubting the existence of God, the Gods, the inner worlds, life after death and the mystical teachings of their parents' faith. I have heard graduates explain to their parents, as did a young man recently, "We are trained in school to follow the scientific method and to question everything. I no longer believe in God because there is no scientific proof of God's existence." Steeped in the university's atheistic ambience, these youth have essentially converted from Hinduism to secular humanism. Universities, being equal-opportunity institutions, have the same affect on unsuspecting adherents of all faiths. Jewish students return home more unbelieving, Catholics turn more liberal and Muslims become strangers to their born religion.

Gurudeva was confronted by this issue nearly three decades ago. In response, he directed his swamis to compose a summary of the beliefs of this school of thought along with three other atheistic viewpoints (materialism, existentialism and communism). He published the results in *Dancing with Siva*. He realized how important it is for students to know the belief systems of Western thought and doctrine, for they permeate and color most university subjects. I have been asked by youth and parents how we can reconcile Hinduism with secular humanism. Hence, on pages 12-13 I have prepared a Hindu counterpoint to each of the nine secular humanist beliefs.

In its search for meaning and value in life, secular humanism (or simply Humanism, the uppercase term adherents prefer) views the world through the lens of reason and science alone. Its concepts of morality have a purely rational, nonspiritual basis as well.

In 2002 the International Humanist and Ethical Union issued the Amsterdam Declaration as their official defining statement: "Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values



in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality."

To help Hindu students cope with the overwhelming influence of secular humanism, I suggest that Hinduism is the original and most humanistic philosophy of all. It has everything that humanism has and much more.

A core concept of Humanism is expressed by its third belief: "I believe in the preservation and enhancement of the human species as my ultimate concern, and in the global human family, which must preserve the Earth for future generations."

Hinduism has no trouble endorsing this conviction. The difference lies in the question, "What aspects of the human condition need to be enhanced and how?" Hinduism accepts the secular humanist values above and adds what it considers the essential purpose of human life—spiritual advancement, moving closer and closer to God (which for monists is one's innermost, divine Self) over a span of many lifetimes.

Hinduism approaches the advancement of humanity in the context of its divinity, and indeed the divinity of all things, including the material universe. A Hindu would point out that quantum physics is revealing that the universe itself is supernatural and conscious, a concept thoroughly described in our millennia-old scriptures.

While secular humanism nobly advocates service to one's fellow man, Hindu humanism spiritualizes selfless service in the form of karma yoga, transforming our work and all our activities into worship and thereby bringing us closer to realizing our innate union with God. Pramukh Swami Maharaj of BAPS counseled his followers in the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake: "When people are facing difficulties and sorrows, our Indian tradition is to offer them solace. We feel that by serving the human beings we serve the Lord Himself."

Ideally the Hindu approach to worshiping God through service is taught to teenage Hindus by both their parents and temple teachers. Also, it is important for these teens to have the experience of participating in service projects on a regular basis. Fortunately, many temples organize such service projects. If there are no Hindu projects in your area, then expand the search into the general community for



activities related to improving the environment, disaster relief, or providing clothes, food and care for the needy.

What are some of the other key differences between these two forms of humanism? While secular humanism glorifies reason as king, Hinduism knows it to be but one source of knowing. What the former denounces as superstition the latter reveres as mystical experience. While secular humanism says there is no afterlife, the Hindu believes that each and every soul undertakes many lifetimes on the

**Pondering issues:** A college student is musing over the subjects his professor is presenting, most of which reflect Western views of reality. His challenge is to discover how they connect to his Hindu upbringing.

planet. He understands the wisdom in this cycle of birth, death and rebirth and seeks to do well enough in this life to earn entry to a high-minded family in the next. The knowledge of reincarnation eliminates the fear of death and, coupled with the law of karma, explains the diversity of human experience. In an ironic twist, the current frontiers of university science, not the old school, are deeply immersed in studies on nonlocal consciousness (read soul and reincarnation), nonmaterialism of the cosmos (the darling of quantum physics) and awareness in plants and even inert matter. So, a century from now some of this conflict may be moot.

Gurudeva spoke of how Hinduism "brings forth the wonderful feelings of a belief in the cosmic processes of reincarnation coupled with knowledge of the laws of karma and the wisdom of dharma in which everyone has his rightful place and purpose in life. It brings the broadmindedness of total acceptance of all other religions as expressions of the One God's creation, the blessing of a complete devotional path revolving around powerful temples, the fulfillment of a profound mystical teaching founded on yoga and brought forth by the seers and saints and gurus, and so much more. Our religion is so strong, so rich and varied that very few can claim to understand it in its completeness. It is immense, an immense religion, so immense that we have difficulty sometimes explaining it to those who hold to a simpler doctrine."

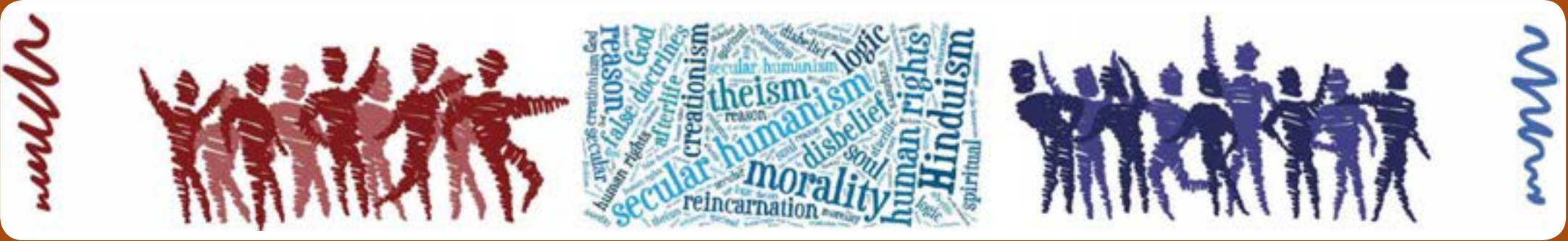
With their understanding of the workings of the three worlds, Hindus also have the joy of pilgrimage, setting aside worldly concerns and journeying to sacred places at auspicious times for special blessings. Gurudeva explained, "Unlike the proud 'free thinkers' who deem themselves emancipated, above the religious life, we Hindus feel that receiving the darshan from the Gods and the help that comes therein invigorates our being and inspires us to be even more diligent in our spiritual life. Unlike the rationalists who feel confident that within themselves lie all the resources to meet all needs, and that praying to Gods for help is a pathetic exercise in futility, the Hindu wisely submits to the Divine and thus avoids the abyss of disbelief."

Then there is the joy of mysticism. As Gurudeva put it: "How grand is the Hindu mystical tradition, with its sadhanas and yogas, with its wealth of understanding of the etheric bodies, of the nadis and the chakras, of the aura and the pranas, of the various states of consciousness and levels of existence, and so much more."

Young Hindu going to college should be prepared to immerse themselves in the academic world, where reason is king, as a temporary limiting of awareness to gain the lessons the courses have to offer, not to be converted to the path of skepticism and doubt. I advise youth to keep in mind that many academics are dedicated to convincing theists that they are on an ignorant path, and to convince Hindus that our religion is crude, outdated and rife with superstition. I urge them to continue their spiritual practices at school, including puja, japa, yoga, meditation and scriptural study, and look forward to graduating as a great student who is still a good Hindu.



The nine beliefs below, drawn from *Dancing with Siva: Hinduism's Contemporary Catechism*, summarize the worldview of secular humanism. To the right we offer a Hindu counterpoint to each humanist belief.



9 Beliefs of Secular Humanism...

and a Hindu Counterpoint

1	<b>Dismissal of Theism</b>	I believe in nontheism, as there is no rational proof for the existence of God, and do not delude myself with thoughts of a Supreme Being.	<b>Strong Faith In God</b>	I believe in a one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality. Great souls have testified to their personal experiences of the God, whose existence is affirmed by scriptures.
2	<b>Rejecting Religion &amp; Superstition</b>	I believe that traditional religions and faiths preach false doctrines, are oppressive and lead their followers toward ignorance, bigotry and dogmatism, and that it is my duty to be actively skeptical of and challenge the illusions of orthodox religions and all attempts to explain the world in supernatural terms.	<b>Respect for Religions</b>	I believe that the world's religions are based upon valid transcendental experiences of the Divine. I believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's pure love and light, deserving tolerance and understanding.
3	<b>Furthering Humanity</b>	I believe in the preservation and enhancement of the human species as my ultimate concern, and in the global human family, which must preserve the Earth for future generations through developing a secular, planetary morality and system of law.	<b>The Sacredness of All</b>	I believe in the sacredness of life, which includes the vast cosmos in all its manifestations, and thus in the preservation of the Earth and all its species, and in the value of spiritual luminaries working with and advising secular leaders in matters of government.
4	<b>Being Good Without a God</b>	I believe that living a good, moral life is the best means for individual and collective happiness and that morality has a rational, secular basis.	<b>Guided Toward Goodness by God</b>	I believe that moral, religious life is essential to the highest form of individual and community good and that ethical principles have their roots in the soil of faith, spiritual experience, holy texts and cultural wisdom.
5	<b>Protecting Human Rights</b>	I believe in expanding human rights and intellectual and moral freedom, and in secular democracy, with strict separation of church and state, as the means of eliminating discrimination and attaining equality and justice for all.	<b>Guarding All Human Rights</b>	I believe in a balance of human rights and responsibilities, in the necessity for equal religious and intellectual freedom for followers of all faiths and that Hindu spiritual principles, properly exercised, will eliminate discrimination and bring equality and justice to all.
6	<b>Education &amp; Free Inquiry</b>	I believe in the development of the creative human potential through education in the arts and sciences and in the paramount importance of free inquiry in an open, pluralistic, universalist society.	<b>Knowledge &amp; Freedom</b>	I believe there is a profound reservoir of human karma and capability that gives rise to creativity, art, science and indeed all forms of knowing and that people will unfold these best when given unfettered freedom of thought and inquiry.
7	<b>Relying Solely on Reason</b>	I believe in the application and development of reason and modern science as the highest means to understanding the universe, solving human problems and enabling each individual to realize his greatest potential.	<b>Relying on Reason &amp; Superconsciousness</b>	I believe that a full comprehension of the universe requires the partnership of superconsciousness and religious tradition with reason and science, and that there is no inherent conflict between the two.
8	<b>Focus on this Life; Disbelief in an Afterlife</b>	I believe in striving for fulfillment and happiness in this life and reject all notions of reincarnation and afterlife as false and baseless, seeking my fullest capacity as a human being here and now, serving others and creating a better, more just world.	<b>Belief in Reincarnation</b>	I believe in reincarnation, that the soul, consciousness, is nonlocal and survives physical death. Nonetheless, it is fruitless to dwell on past or future lives, and wise to live this life fully in the now, fulfilling dharma, so we may attain our higher purpose in future births.
9	<b>Scientific Creationism</b>	I believe in Darwin's theory of evolution as scientific fact, and in naturalism, holding that the known world is all that exists, and that it has no supernatural or spiritual creation, control or significance.	<b>The Discoveries of Modern Science</b>	I believe that the natural and supernatural form one reality, that science is only one measure of the cosmos and, in fact, quantum physics is discovering the reality of nonmaterial dimensions and affirming Hinduism's declaration of a unitive consciousness that pervades the universe.



## LETTERS

### Thank You

Reverential namaskaram to you. The students, teachers and management of Maruthi Vidyalaya convey their devotional thanks to you for the inspiring and enlightening HINDUISM TODAY. I am 82—a retired central government servant—now serving as honorary president of the school. After reading your April/May/June 2013 issue's Publisher's Desk article, we can see that Hinduism gloriously fulfills all the qualities of a sublime religion. It has the integration of a universal culture with perennial and enduring life values. The five religious dimensions, embracing the divine lineages and sampradayas, encompass all gurus and kulas, leading to the fulfillment of life and bliss—of dharma and moksha. I felt inspired to write in thanks for the gems of knowledge and wisdom you have placed in this magazine.

Your discourse—writing, interviews and articles on people, events, ideas and values in the magazine—is like an open university, where we get our distant education. I request you send us videos of Himalayan Academy, the temple complex and campus on Kauai as a visual education for us.

It is my regular practice, a religious ritual, to read and understand HINDUISM TODAY and to talk to our students and teachers about the treasure trove we get every quarter. For this distant education we get about Sanatana Dharma, all the way from Kauai, I am the extreme sevak.

We have learned well from you that devotional practice without philosophy is superstition, and that philosophy without devotion and selfless service, is sheer pedagogy—armchair dialogue—creating disharmony and conflict in the world. You have, through this special issue, dispelled false ideas and views of many intellectuals and religious creeds which state that religion and culture are different and distinct aspects. But it is religion that is the real source of culture, and it is religion which integrates society and nations. The all-embracing significance of Sanatana Dharma is as universal as the sky.

This recent issue has given a graphic account of the challenging and sublime trek to Amarnath. We enjoyed the illuminating and inspiring "In My Opinion" piece of Partha J. Miller, as well the passing on of the dharma through sacred dance by Mrs. Hema Rayagopalan. We loved the spirit and education of the sacred Siddaganga math in Karnataka, and the festival at the campus in Austin showed us that Hinduism shines universally and eternally, all across the Earth. With reverent pranams.

BHATTU GANESH  
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA, INDIA  
MARUTHIVIDYALAYA.COM

### Guide Our Youth

Thank you for another excellent issue of HINDUISM TODAY (Oct/Nov/Dec 2013) with so many interesting articles. The article "Guide Our Youth" by Aneesh Bairavasundaram is especially important. He has brought to light the difficulties of growing up Hindu in the US. Interestingly, he has also offered a partial solution: Sunday youth classes, also known as *Bal Vihars* or *Bala Mandirs*. If Hindu parents of young children get together in every neighborhood, meet at a definite time on weekends and teach the basics of our dharma, then young children will feel proud about their heritage and do well in life. There are many websites, books, DVDs and CDs to help parents and children. Some have developed detailed curricula and handbooks for teachers on how and what to teach. One such website is [www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com). Any parent wishing to start a Bal Vihar should visit this website. I hope parents all over the world take up this challenge and instruct young children about their glorious heritage.

ARUN MEHTA  
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA  
AMEHTA91326@YAHOO.COM

### Non-Indian Hindus

I would like to respond to recent letters about why Westerners wish to convert to Hinduism, and whether they should be referred instead to Christianity (HINDUISM TODAY, Jan/Feb/Mar, 2014). Reincarnation is the easiest way to relocate to the US. When I was born—before immigration was opened to Hindus—it was the only way. There were no Hindu parents available here at that time, so we just had to do the best we could. Many of us, like myself, found parents who had themselves rejected the dogma of Christianity, while others did come through Christian or Jewish parents. But as we grew up, we all searched for the religion of our soul, finally finding it in Hinduism. Our own Gurudeva (founder of HINDUISM TODAY), having immigrated by the same means, willingly brought us fully into Hinduism. Despite physical appearance, we are Hindus. Many people continue to immigrate through reincarnation, even today—many more doing so than there are Hindu parents here to accommodate. Thus there are Hindu souls wearing Western bodies of all ages, searching for their true religion. This is not to say that every Westerner interested in Hinduism is a Hindu soul. But many are; and in my opinion it is unwise to indiscriminately attempt to send them all "back" to a religion that may never have been their own.

CHAMUNDI SABANATHAN  
KAPAA, HAWAII, USA  
CHAMUNDI@SONIC.NET

The HINDU PRESS INTERNATIONAL article, *Hinduism in America: A Call for Proposals*, (November 14, 2013) has several interesting ideas. The most interesting to me and my friends, some of whom include senior swamis, is the call for input into "American Hindus of Non-Indian Extraction: Who are they?" This is a topic that is fuzzy, presumably because if non-Indian Hindus are deemed lower caste, then the massive interest in Hinduism and yoga in the West will suffer—to everyone's detriment. Would it be possible for HPI or HINDUISM TODAY to write an article answering this question of the place of non-Indians within Hinduism? Additionally, such an article should include information on who makes such determinations, how authoritative and binding those determinations are and something about who listens to them.

PETER BEACHAM  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA  
OMPREM108@GMAIL.COM

### Hindu Westernization

Recently I was driving my close relative to the airport. He is well educated with double masters, and just for interest, I asked him, "How many second-generation Hindus marry Hindu spouses?" His answer shocked me. "About half," he said. Though a rough estimate, it got me thinking. I realized my cousin had married a Christian. Second-generation Hindus know more about Christmas than Mahashivaratri, and some even celebrate Christmas by exchanging gifts and waiting for Santa Claus. This shows the openness of Hindus to all faiths, but it may very well be a weakness that is diluting Hinduism. There are over two billion Christians today. Compared to this to Hinduism—the world's oldest religion—which is practiced by about one billion people. I believe the main reason Christianity is so well structured towards growth is that it is easy to practice. Islam's rising numbers are even more interesting, with 15 billion people, it is growing quickly. To help our children continue to be Hindus and to avoid significant decline in our religious population, we need to look at things creatively and keep the attention of the current generation of young adults. We could do this through social networks, camps and other methods available through Internet.

N. CHORAGUDI  
IRON MOUNTAIN, MICHIGAN, USA  
CHORAGUDI@HOTMAIL.COM

### Hinduism Outside India

The reason I'm a great fan of HINDUISM TODAY is that it is the only magazine known to me that thinks of Hindus and Hinduism beyond the borders of modern India. If I'm con-

cerned about the Hindus outside of India and would like to know more about the activities of the Cham Hindus of Vietnam [See p. 34], the Indonesian Hindus of Bali and other islands, the plight of Afghan Hindus and their happy lives in Europe, or the Hindu royal priests of Thailand and their activities, the only solution is HINDUISM TODAY.

Unfortunately, all Hindu magazines in India seem to be limited to ideas related to Hinduism as practiced and lived within the modern political borders of India. They see Hindutva as more-or-less synonymous with Indian nationalism, neglecting the need to view Hinduism in the light of what has been termed by many historians as the Greater India (Brihattara Bharata or Mahabharata), which today, in my view, doesn't only comprise certain countries of the Indian subcontinent or South East Asia, but also the Indian diaspora and the Hindus of all lands.

I have developed a deep interest in Hindu religious scriptures found in Java and Bali. I look forward to study Kavi (Old Javanese), the sacred language of the Indonesian Hindu scriptures, which is suffering terrible neglect after Java was converted to Islam. I realized the depth of Hindu influence on modern Java after exploring what is termed today as *Kejawen* or Javanese beliefs, which are still very

prominent and influential among the Muslims of Java (even some of the Indonesian presidents have been followers of these beliefs) and are nothing but yoga and Vedanta in a disguise to suit the Islamic culture. Recently, scholars from the Netherlands have discovered some extremely rare ancient Javanese scriptures on yoga, such as *Dharma Patanjala*, a Saiva text presenting the philosophy of Patanjali in a Javanese version. (The original Sanskrit version is said to have been lost in India.) This has further fueled my interest in the Indonesian form of Hinduism.

It is believed in Indonesian Hindu traditions that Sage Patanjali visited Indonesia and is highly revered there as the foremost of the Pancha Kushikas and Pancha Rishis (Five Rishis) who introduced Hindu thoughts to Indonesia around 2,000 years ago.

At present I'm working on writing a Hindi translation of *Sara Samuccaya*, a scripture that commands the same amount of respect among the Balinese Hindus as the *Bhagavad Gita* does in India. *Sara Samuccaya*, a text composed by Sage Vararuchi (who flourished prior to 300 BCE), is an anthology of shlokas from the *Mahabharata*, but completely unknown in India.

My dream is to forge a stronger relationship between the Indian Hindu religious

leaders and these non-Indian Hindu traditions. Having been developed over millennia independently from India, these are somewhat different from the forms of Hinduism that we practice in India today, but they are no less relevant and connected to the wider picture of Hinduism, due to their pledge of allegiance to the *Vedas*, the ultimate source of all mystical knowledge and wisdom in Hinduism.

SIDDHARTHA KRISHNA  
RISHIKESH, INDIA  
SIDHA@OMKARANANDA-ASHRAM.ORG

### Correction

In "Quotes and Quips" (Jan/Feb/Mar 2014), the quote, "Take up one idea. make that one idea your life..." is incorrectly credited to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is actually a quote from Swami Vivekananda.

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

Letters, Hinduism Today  
107 Kaholalele Road  
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA  
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351  
or visit: [www.hinduismtoday.com/letters](http://www.hinduismtoday.com/letters)

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

## Tuning into the Blessed Vision

### How to help disseminate life's most vital knowledge

NO ONE WAS THERE TO EXPLAIN," DR. Hemalatha Sothynathan says of her days growing up as a Hindu in Malaysia. "I understood neither the teachings, the scriptures nor the practice—why we go to the temple, why we prostrate, why there are so many Gods. None of it was relevant to my life."

Hemalatha became a dentist and developed a passion for teaching. Today she is a lecturer in Dental Hygiene and Therapy at Nanyang Polytechnic in Singapore. Her life has been one of intense challenges. At times she even looked into other faiths, hoping to find direction and meaning.

One day she heard the founder of HINDUISM TODAY, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, speaking at a temple. For the first time, Hemalatha experienced clear, relevant answers to her most pressing questions. "I began reading his magazine, and it gradually brought me understanding and perspective. I realized that life has a magnificent purpose and experiences come to teach us and move us ahead.

Most convincing of all was the spirit that runs through the magazine, the spirit of oneness, of the primacy of the inner life over the outer, which brings everything together into a one blessed vision. I repeat *tat tvam asi* as often as I can.

"Challenges are still there to be faced, but they no longer confuse or discourage, for one sees them for what they are. In the context of the greater picture, they are not that important. Just do your best, move on and don't worry. I feel blessed to have been touched by these teachings."

Hemalatha regularly donates generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "I know that many who are overwhelmed by their lives would respond as I have if they were to come in contact with the magazine, and so I have to do what I can to help spread the blessings."

If you feel as Hemalatha does, please donate to the Production Fund at [hheonline.org/donate\\_pf](http://hheonline.org/donate_pf). Do it soon, while you are thinking about it. You'll be doing a great



**Hemalatha with daughter Kalpana:**

"After reading Hinduism Today a long time, I am free from worry, anxiety and scattered energies. I am more peaceful; my path is smoother."

\*\*\*\*\*

deal of good.

Subscribe to our Production Fund newsletter at [gurudeva.org/email-news](http://gurudeva.org/email-news) for updates of the magazine and its all-important Production Fund.

Please feel free to contact us at [hhe@hindu.org](mailto:hhe@hindu.org) or call 1-808-634-5407.



## QUOTES & QUIPS

### Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark.

**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861–1941), celebrated Bengali writer who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913

It is not the knowledge of words that makes a man wise, but purity of heart and steadiness of the mind. **Yogasri Svami Yogananda Giri**, founder of Svami Gitananda Ashram, Italy

Those who cannot live in harmony with the world, though they have learned many things, are still ignorant. *Tirukural 140*

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. **Rumi** (1207–1273), Sufi mystic and poet

There is no death. Only a change of worlds. **Chief Seattle** (1780–1866), leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish Native American tribes

Common men talk bagfuls of religion but do not practice even a grain of it. The wise man speaks a little, even though his whole life is religion expressed in action. **Sri Ramakrishna** (1836–1886), famed guru of Swami Vivekananda

Our life is only worth while if we do good deeds and walk the path towards God. **Pramukh Swami Maharaj**, guru of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs. **Farrah Gray**, American businessman, philanthropist and motivational speaker

No one knows what's next, but everybody does it. **George Carlin** (1937–2008), American comedian, writer and actor

If you are constantly absorbed in the soul, then only love and goodness is reflected back. You see the good in everything. **Paramhansa Hariharananda** (1907–2002), Indian yogi and guru

Man possesses unlimited strength, infinite capacity for work and boundless perseverance. It is because they cannot always realize it that most men are so miserably inert. **Swami Pranavananda** (1896–1941), founder of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha

Never forget that the universe is a single living organism possessed of one substance and one soul, holding all things suspended in a single consciousness and creating all things with a single purpose that they might work together spinning, weaving and

knotting whatever comes to pass. **Marcus Aurelius** (121–180 AD), Roman emperor and philosopher

In a moment of crisis, the wise build bridges and the foolish build dams. **Nigerian proverb**

The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool. **William Shakespeare** (1564–1616), English playwright

I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying. **Nelson Mandela** (1918–2013), South African president, revolutionary and philanthropist

Never look back unless you are planning to go that way. **Henry David Thoreau** (1817–1862), American author, poet and philosopher

Perfection is the willingness to be imperfect. **Lao Tzu** (604–531 BCE), founder of Taoism

Just as the rays of light share and diffuse the radiance of the sun, so you too share and reflect the golden glories of Indra, the

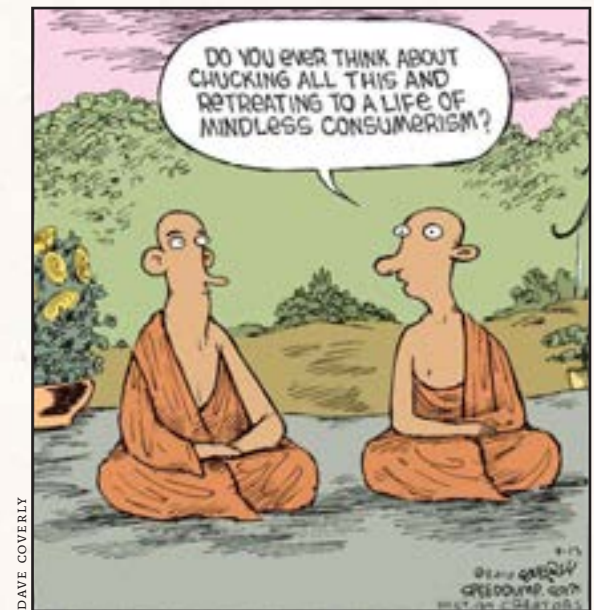
cosmic soul. Let us meditate on the divine presence and for our share, enjoy the ecstasy of bliss vibrating in the world of past and future creations, by virtue of Indra's omnipresent majesty. *Rig Veda 8.99.3*

In India, "cold weather" is merely a conventional phrase and has come into use through the necessity of having some way to distinguish between weather which will melt a brass door-knob and weather which will only make it mushy. **Mark Twain** (1835–1910), American writer

God Siva's all-knowingness is always inside of us. We don't have to do anything for it to be there; that's the important thing. We just have to look in the right place at the right time. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY

We must also have desirelessness even for the realization of the Self itself in order

to freely proceed and attain the goal. The realization of the Self must never be to us a need to get away from something, an avoidance, a departure from or a means to become better than others. Now we can see that desire is the barrier to freedom, physically, mentally and emotionally. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001)



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Restorative Roots

**K**OWN AS HARIDRA IN SANSKRIT AND CURCUMA LONGA botanically, turmeric is a small plant closely related to ginger. Found in a variety of cuisines, its bright yellow roots are commonly ground into paste or powder. Sacred to Hindus and indigenous to India, turmeric is an essential part of Indian society. In temples, turmeric water is used daily in ritual ablution of the Deities, and the powder, mixed with unpolished rice, is an important offering during puja.

Western researchers have been rediscovering properties in this root already familiar to ayurveda, such as being anti-swelling, anti-cancerous, an age-abating antioxidant, a digestive enhancer, liver protector, blood purifier, antiseptic, cholesterol buster and skin toner. More uses are being discovered as researchers experiment with curcuminoids, turmeric's active chemical ingredients.

According to a 2013 [greenmedinfo.com](http://greenmedinfo.com) article by Sayer Ji, an advisory board member of the National Health Federation, turmeric's medicinal properties have been the subject of over 5,600 peer-reviewed and published biomedical studies. Sayer Ji mentions his own five-year research project on the sacred plant, which revealed



evidence of over 600 potential preventive and therapeutic uses, as well as 175 distinct beneficial physiological effects.

Given the sheer density of research performed on this remarkable spice, it is no wonder that a growing number of studies have concluded that it compares favorably to a variety of conventional medications. These include steroids, antidepressants, blood thinners, and drugs for inflammation, chemotherapy, diabetes and high cholesterol.

## Crossword

### Across

- Parameshvara
- "Doctrine of one God"
- Old and venerated sage or seer
- God's divine law
- All the peoples of earth
- Sphere
- Turn\_\_\_\_, an ayurvedic wonder
- Hindu stories of Gods and heroes
- "Great time" or "dissolver of time"
- Frozen water
- Wonder
- Melodic structure in Indian music
- Worship, adoration
- Inner nadi current, colored pink
- Many ancient scriptures were written on this leaf
- The world's oldest religion
- Water dosha
- It just takes one to block the light of the Sun
- Principle of cause and effect
- Makes a mistake

### Down

- The Sun God
- The Preserver
- Bulls
- Decree
- Cure
- Unlike the body, the soul is \_\_\_\_\_
- Mental or physical injury; hostility
- Sandalwood paste
- At the present moment
- Compassion
- Sanskrit word for seed; origin
- Bond of individuality; ego
- He is single tasked
- Request
- Liberation
- Color of the Ajna chakra
- Lentils
- The word
- In later Sanskrit, meaning sky, ether

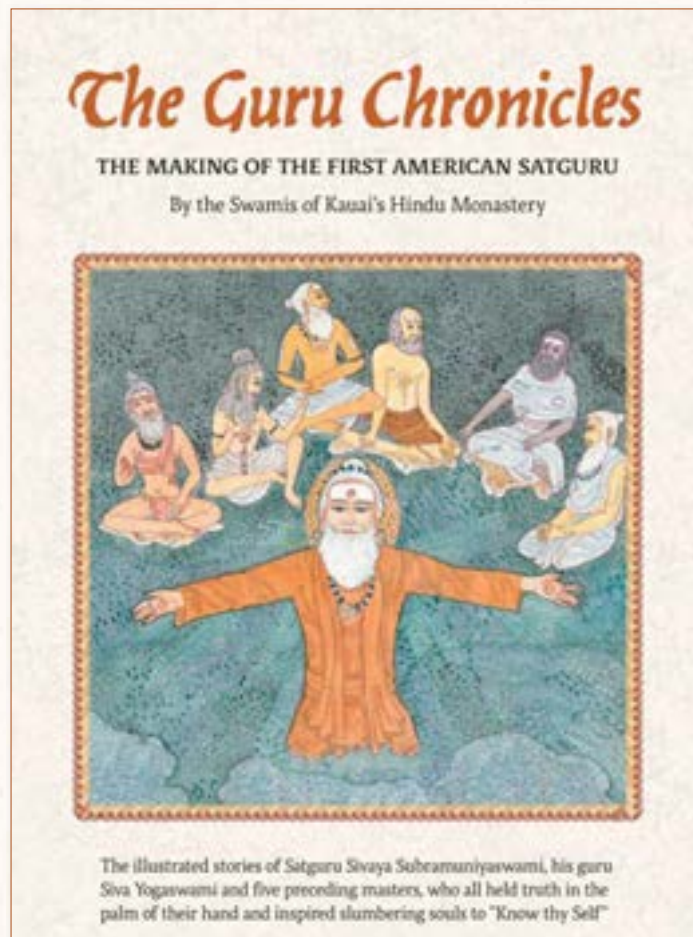


or space.  
33. Element associated with Vayu

For the completed puzzle or to access the interactive online version, visit: [bit.ly/april14crossword](http://bit.ly/april14crossword)



# How Enlightened Men Live



"Just now I completed the reading of the most powerful *Guru Chronicles*. What a rewarding experience! The design, contents and presentation of the most powerful book to awaken, most wonderful to inspire and the most informative to instill constant devotion to the eternal Guru Parampara are indeed superb and praiseworthy." **DR. S.P. SABHARATHNAM, CHENNAI**

"Deeply captivating. The book has a musical magic, a beautifully lyrical story that happens at once in the past and the present, with the promise of an ever-deepening future of awakening for the reader. It brings so vibrantly to life the simple life and deep spiritual culture of India and Sri Lanka. S. Rajam's art adds to the musical quality, as his work is rhythmic and lyrical, too." **GAYATRI RAJAN, CALIFORNIA**



Here is an adventure into the rarely divulged world of spiritual masters, full of extraordinary stories, insights and spiritual encounters. At its heart is the untold life of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who founded HINDUISM TODAY, his guru Siva Yogaswami and five preceding masters of the spiritual lineage. Illustrated by the South Indian genius, S. Rajam.



FROM THE AGAMAS

## Marvel at Mount Meru's Majesty

A celestial abode, endowed with lustrous cities encircled by heavenly lands

*The following is a lucid translation of compiled excerpts from the Mrugendra Agama, chapter 13, in which Indra describes to Sage Bharadvaja the beauties of Mount Meru, center of the Prithivi-loka, or Earth plane.*

IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR EVOLUTION, LORD ANANTESVARA creates many worlds at various levels of existence. Here is explained the islands, rivers and forests of the Prithivi-loka.

The *Jambudvipa* (island of jambu trees) appears as the navel of the earth sphere. It is surrounded by the salty ocean whose size equals the Jambudvipa. At the center of the great island is Mount Meru, of the nature of gold, it is the supreme king of all mountains. Its effulgence exceeds the brilliance of the Sun. It is honored and frequented by the devas. The highest of the mountain's three encircling ridges, of its upper section, serves as the dwelling place of the eight *Lokapalas* (directional Deities). The knowers of the scriptures call it *Chakravata*, and it shimmers with the resplendent rays of jewels. At the levels below, reside the *Siddhas*, *Gandharvas* and *Maruts*. On its summit are eight cities.

These cities belong to Indra and the other seven Deities, who reside in the eight directions. The city of *Amara-vati*, in the east, belongs to Indra. It is beautified with the shimmering rays of clustered gems. Frequently resorted to by *Siddhas*, *Sadhyas* and *Maruts*, it rests upon a stretch of golden land. The city known as *Tejovati*, to the southeast, belongs to Agni. It abounds in red and whitish-yellow gems. Its many enclosures and gopuras are built of gold. The city known as *Samyamini*, belonging to Lord Yama, God of Death, is in the south. It is fortified with high ramparts built of iron. It is served by the soldiers of Yama. The city called *Krishnavati* belongs to Nirrti and is resorted to by the *Daityas*. Its palace resembles the palace of Yama and it is richly decorated with sprawling canopies, blooming with clusters of sapphire light.

The city known as *Suddhavati*, belonging to Varuna, the Lord of water, is in the west. It is formed of *sphatika* (crystals). Its buildings shine forth with the soft whites of the clouds. It is visited by aquatic beings such as tortoises, fish, sharks and others. In the northwest is the city known as *Gandhavati*, belonging to Vayu. It is richly decorated with glorious flags and banners of white and gold. It is encrusted with a multitude of gems. The city is served by ethereal soldiers known for their strength and vigor. The city called *Mahodaya*, belonging to Kubera, is in the north. It is constructed of white stones such as moonstone and pearl, and is replete with palaces which shine like the Himalayas. It is extolled by hosts of brahmins and sages. The

city called *Yasovati* is in the northeast. It belongs to Ishana. It is constructed with every kind of precious gem and is served by the *Rudras*. These cities are capable of yielding the pleasures of all the seasons and appear reddened by the pollen of Brahma's *parijata* flowers, which wafts through the mountain winds. These are indeed heavens designed for the eight directional Deities and for those who follow their guidance. In such, these cities are praised by the poets of Earth.

At Mt. Meru's peak and through its center is the city of *Manovati*. This is the city of Brahma, honored by the directional Deities. The effulgent clusters of brilliant rays emitted by the precious gems of this city reach and redden the endless routes of space. The devas and the sages who are endowed with great splendor and glory do penance here, observing the *yamas* and *niyamas* and meditating on Brahma. They work to attain the supreme goals desired by them.

There are other mountains in the four directions below Meru. There are also nine islands and nine great prospering lands.

In order to effect stability to Meru it is surrounded by four supportive mountains. On each of these mountains is a heavenly tree. Their names are *Kadamba*, *Jambu*, *Asvattha* and *Nyagrodha*.

A river originating from the fruit juice of the Jambu-tree continuously flows clockwise around Mount Meru, and having transformed the land into the nature of gold, enters into the ground at the mountain's base. Upon drinking the juicy water of that river, the birds, snakes, deer and monkeys become gold in color, and, too, those who swim within its waters gain a golden hue.

The seven oceans encircling the nine islands are: the ocean of salt, milk, curd, ghee, sugarcane juice, wine and the ocean of pure water. Beyond the

seventh ocean of pure water there is a great stretch of land infused with golden luster, abounding in gems, trees and mountains. At the exterior of this land is the mountain called *Lokaloka*, the front side of which always remains illumined, while its backside stays dark. The rays of the sun that fall on its summits become as cool as the rays of the moon. Beyond *Lokaloka* is a vast region of dense darkness, and beyond this dark region lies a great ocean called *Garbhoda*, the king of oceans, which extends up all sides of the *Brahmanda*, the golden, cosmic egg.



**Mystical Meru:** This Chinese painting depicts Meru's celestial structure, with its surrounding peaks and oceans

DR. S. P. SABHARATHNAM SIVACHARYAR, of the Adi Saiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Shilpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the *Mrugendra Agama*.

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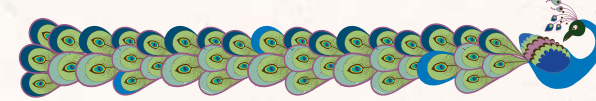
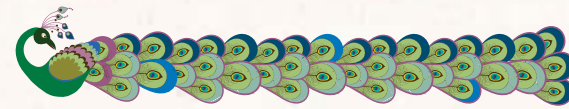
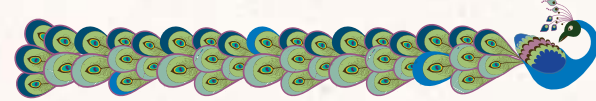
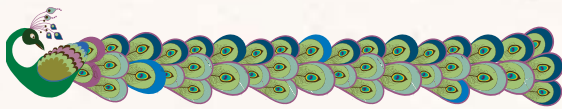
# Lord Murugan's Transforming Waterfall Temple

FOR MILLENNIA, THE RITUAL TEMPLE culture of the Saiva Agama scriptures spread from South India across Southeast Asia. In Malaysia and Singapore an authentic, Agamic culture of Hindu temple worship thrives, vigorous and unchanged, into the 21st century. This is due to the Tamil community's dedication to their traditions and their robust relationship and interchange with India's traditional priesthoods, temple architects and craftsmen. No doubt every one of Malaysia's hundreds of temples, in fact any Hindu temple, has

tales about sacrifice and the spiritual power of the Gods that inspires Hindus to forge holy places to invoke grace from the heavenly realms. This is one of those stories—that of the famous Sri Balathandayuthapani Waterfall Temple of Penang. The recent rebirth of this temple and the achievements of its volunteer group, the Sri Balathandayuthapani Youth Organization (SBYO), offer testimony to the power of surrender to one's chosen Deity. In the photo here we see a parade of sacred water pots during the grand consecration rites held in 2012.







## HISTORY

# Penang Temple Reborn after 150 Years

Wherever Tamils go, their beloved Lord Murugan follows. Since the 1700s, Tamils have climbed the hills of Penang, first for water, then for blessings.

OFF THE WEST COAST OF KEDAH STATE, Malaysia, floats the beautiful island of Penang, a popular tourist destination and home to the progressive seaport metropolis of Georgetown. Strategically situated at the entrance to the Malacca Straits, Georgetown was a valued haven for ships to anchor after the long trip from India, before moving on to Singapore and Hong Kong. Flowing from the island's central mountain peaks, known as Penang Hills, there are two giant waterfalls, one in the west and one in the east.

The eastern waterfall drops down to a river that can be accessed by boat from the sea. SBYO founding member and former secretary of the temple, Ananth Viswanathan, relates, "Around 1771, the British negotiated with the Sultan of Kedah to use Penang as a port. Captain Francis Light was the first to establish a settlement. The indentured laborers from Tamil Nadu he brought with him found a source of fresh water at the eastern waterfall. They also wanted a place to pray. Muruga is the most popular Deity for Tamils, and hilltops are His favorite abode. So

they established a shrine there. It is the oldest place of worship on Penang Island."

By 1791, using subterfuge and military muscle, the British had taken over the island of Penang. Later Malaysia became a colony under British rule and only achieved independence in 1957.



No one knows exactly when the first Vel shrine was established, but drawings done as early as 1879 show a thatched-roof structure on the left bank of the waterfall, and records tell us the annual festival of Thai Pusam was being celebrated there. Ananth says, "Around

1904 the waterfall was declared a catchment area and officially declared the Penang Botanical Garden." Access by crowds of pilgrims was restricted so as to protect the pristine flow of water. Today these gardens are one of Penang's top attractions. A small Vel shrine still exists in the original location, and with special permission you can visit the falls.

In compensation for their loss, Hindus were given a 13-acre area on another hilltop, 3km from the Botanical Garden. A small notice preserved from a 1913 issue of the *Penang Gazette* reads: "The Hindu Temple beside the foot of the Waterfall is being removed to a site near the Chetty temple in order to prevent contamination of the Municipal Town water supply." Though the new site has no waterfall, the temple is still known universally as the Waterfall Temple.

Two other Murugan temples exist in Penang, a small one at the top of Penang Hills and another at ground level in the city, run by the Chettiar community. The Waterfall Temple is the oldest. At first a small shrine was set up on the new site about halfway up the hill on a narrow outcropping. A growing stream

**150 years of worship:** (top left) Map showing Penang island; (top right) new temple nearing completion at higher elevation, 2012. (below, left to right) first photo of original thatched Waterfall Temple, 1900; second generation temple, 1905; Tamil devotees, 1900; third generation temple, 3 kilometers away from the original falls.

of devotees came to worship Sri Balathandayuthapani, the young renunciate form of Murugan holding a staff.

P. Kuvena Raju, 53, chairman of the temple, a surveyor and valuer by profession, explained, "In 1913, thirteen acres were allotted for the temple in three parcels. One was 115 acres, and there are two other small parcels. They did a good job locating the new site. It has lot of granite bedrock. In the beginning there was only a small eight by eight foot shrine. In 1933 the first steps were built. Then in 1985 the fourth generation temple was built.

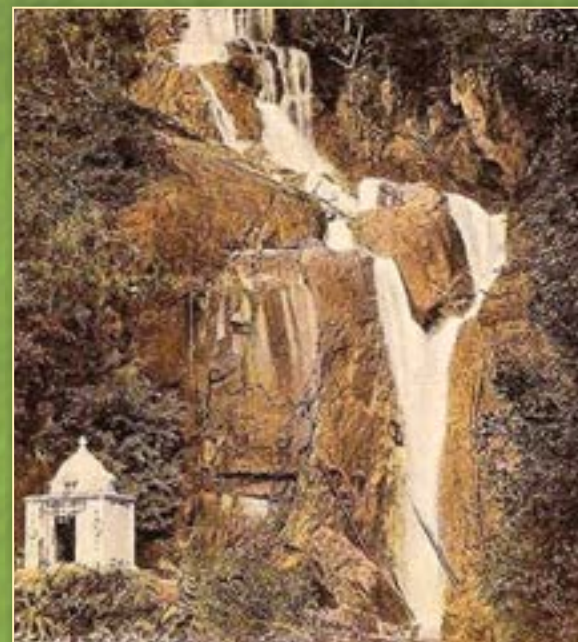
"I became the temple secretary in 1999 and there was talk about renovating the temple, but we could not decide whether to renovate the existing structure or build anew higher up. We also wanted to ascertain what Lord Muruga Himself wanted. For this we used an old traditional method from India. A two-year-old child is asked

to chose between two colored packets, each representing one of the options. The child's choice is considered final, and no further discussion is done on the matter. I had a two-year-old son at that time and we tested him three times. All the three times he picked up the color which meant Lord Muruga wished

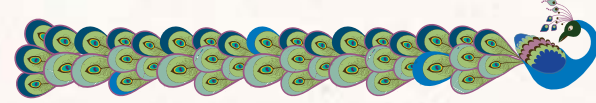
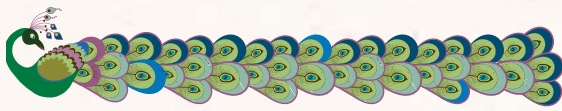
that He and His temple move to a different place. So a final decision was taken and we proceeded with plans to build the fifth generation temple on a granite bedrock plateau higher up the hill. The inauguration and Maha Kumbhabhishekam of the temple was done in 2012."



## The Sri Baladandayuthapani Waterfall Temple Through the Years







KARMA YOGA

# Lord Murugan's Stalwart Servants

A Penang Island youth group sets a world standard for community service, volunteerism and teamwork, conducting a wide array of temple programs

BY RAJIV MALIK

**T**HOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY FROM the six original abodes of Lord Murugan in South India, at this Deity's Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Waterfall Temple in Penang, Malaysia, a small group of His devotees lead a life of service and sadhana, intoxicated with His divine love. For them, the blessings they get from Murugan are so powerful and all-encompassing that no area of their life is untouched. This group is known all over Malaysia as SBYO, the Shri Balathandayuthabani Youth Organization. In June, 2013, I went to Penang to report on the temple's rebirth in a new location and on its volunteers. I saw men, women and children, from the aged to the very young, including highly qualified professionals and businessmen, all serving the temple in joyful devotion.

The morning of my first visit was a hot, sultry midweek workday. Climbing the 400-plus stairs left me breathless, but my fatigue vanished as soon as I entered the temple and had darshan of Lord Murugan. It was a

magnificent, grand building. Not a speck of dust could be seen anywhere on its floors. The place shined. After abhishekam and arati, I interviewed the chief priest and some devotees. The priest lavishly praised the SBYO members for their commitment to consistent weekly routine service at the temple. He said that during the Thai Pusam festival as many as four million worshippers come to the temple, and the volunteers work around the clock. Their range includes grass cutting, bush clearing, grounds maintenance, temple cleaning, decoration, small maintenance jobs related to electricity and water supply and even artistic work such as painting the roof of the temple with spiritual motifs and symbols. Women and children primarily help with feeding the volunteers, cleaning the temple before festivals, lighting lamps and distributing drinks to pilgrims.

I visited again on a Sunday morning. Most SBYO members make a commitment to serve at the temple at least one Sunday a month. I met the entire team—officers, volunteers and their families. Everyone had testimony

to offer of their special experiences and relationships with Lord Murugan, explaining that He is like their father—revered, respected and loved from the core of their hearts. The fact that instead of relaxing at home on the weekends, they chose to come and serve at the temple spoke volumes about devotion and sacrifice of comfort and time for a higher cause. They all love being part of SBYO, describing it as a big extended family, each member participating in the happiness and sorrows of all the others.

The SBYO effectively serves as a management school where they learn how to interact

.....  
**Karma yoga, working for God:**

*(clockwise from right) Cleaning the temple's 1026 steps; helping with Kalvi Viratam when thousands of students fast and bring water to bath Murugan before for their exams. Nannthini Shunmugam, Kamaladevi Nethievellu, Neetiaasree Shunmugam, Gahyathiri Shunmugam. Nannthini is SBYO secretary and handles a ton of paperwork!*



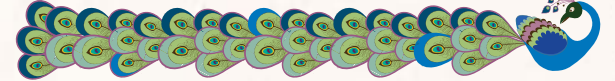
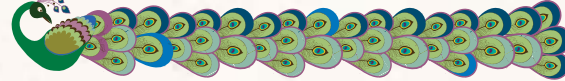
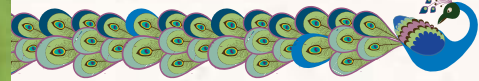
Diverse SBYO Services: accounting, maintenance, feeding, crowd control



MANI NADASON

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY SBYO





with other team members and the public and work in an efficient, disciplined and organized manner. Members learn respect for elders and develop the art of public speaking. Working with SBYO has made them self-confident and enthusiastic. All this has helped them become successful in their academic and professional work outside the temple. Parents who gained these qualities through decades of service in the SBYO are now working to pass them on to their children.

The credibility and reputation of SBYO reached new heights in 2012 when, together with the management of the temple, they organized the completion of the renovation and a grand reconsecration. Spread over many days, the ceremony made front page news, not just in Malaysia but in other parts of the world where the devotees of Lord Murugan took keen interest in this great spiritual happening.

#### Origins Inspired by Community Need

Ananth Viswanathan relates the early history of SBYO: "In 1981 Mr. Chitravelu, Mr. Jodi and Mr. Medi, senior temple committee members, appealed to their friends and colleagues to come to the old Waterfall Temple on the hill to prepare for Thai Pusam. I was

eighteen at the time. Around 25 to 30 of us cleaned and painted the temple and joined the temple committee to help organize the festival in January of 1982. After that we decided to come on the last Sunday of every month. A year later we had a sort of annual general meeting. We needed to create a formal organization to expand our service beyond just cutting the grass and cleaning temple drains. We named ourselves unofficially the Balathandayuthapani Volunteers (BTV) and gained some community recognition."

Shanmugam, 52, who was the longest serving former chairman of SBYO, relates, "I've been associated with SBYO for 33 years. Whatever we have done, we have done out of our love for our Lord Balathandayuthapani. But it would be wrong to say that we are the creators and pioneer members of SBYO. The Lord Himself is the pioneer. He has put us together so that we can work together selflessly. Initially the intent was to help the temple committee manage festivals. This expanded to beautifying the temple grounds. Gradually, we wanted to do more. As unofficial volunteers, we could only act on decisions by the temple committee. To raise funds and work outside the temple, we needed to be officially registered as an independent organization.

COURTESY SBYO



guidance of the elders, and those over forty are still considered senior members. Today we have about 33 youth members and 40 senior members. Everyone works together as a team."

#### Challenges and Success

Ananth Viswanathan describes some of the challenges, "After we registered in 1985, a new group of office bearers on the temple committee felt threatened. The public identified the temple with SBYO, and the management

committee thought we had plans to take over their role. In 1988, after six years of service, they banned us from working and

.....  
**Three decades of service:** (clockwise from above) Pioneer SBYO volunteers in 1982; managing the crowd of four million devotees who come to make milk and kavadi offerings during the annual Thai Pusam festival; SBYO member P.V.K. Devagaran cutting the temple compound grass; ladies serving lunch to other volunteers; priests pours milk over the temple Deity during puja.

### Lord Murugan's shakti inspires the hearts and lives of His devotees



MANI NADASON

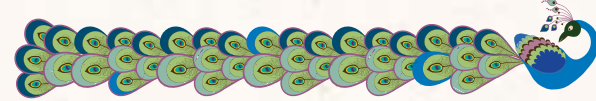
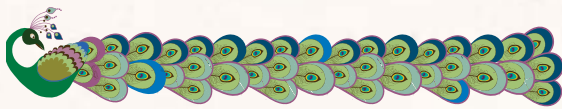


MANI NADASON

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serving at the temple. We were chased out and felt deeply hurt. The problem escalated and was reported in the newspapers. We had the sympathy of the devotees and general public. Temples on public land are owned by the state government, overseen by the Hindu Endowments Board. The matter went to the state. Suddenly there was a reshuffling of the temple management committee and the Hindu Endowment Board by the government. The old temple committee was disbanded."

Ananth continued the story: "The new management committee that was appointed did not want to see this happen again. They decided that every time a new temple committee is formed, two or three SBYO members would be included on the committee (which has fifteen members) and may even be assigned executive positions. For example, I was once the secretary of SBYO and later served as the secretary of the temple committee. Since then we have had no problems with the managing committee. Some say that this 1988 incident should be forgotten, but I feel it offers valuable lessons. The Maha Kumbhabhishekam was a very big event, and once it was over we were shedding tears of joy. For our old team members it was a dream

come true. I have spent almost my entire youth since the age of eighteen dedicatedly working for this temple. Now our children join us in doing the seva work, serving the temple with the same dedication. So the cycle goes on, and gradually the younger generation is taking over."

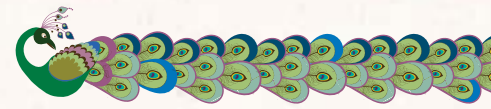
P. Kuvena Raju, 53, former temple chairman, shared his views, "The SBYO team is a permanent presence here. The temple committee keeps shuffling, but SBYO has continuity over decades. But now we cannot manage all the work with the same manpower. Over half of our 13-acre parcel now has structures and landscaping that need maintenance. SBYO needs to grow to cover the area. But so far we see the same SBYO faces and no increase in their strength. We need more hands. Now we are trying some paid staff to help SBYO cover the maintenance. However, when we have festivals we do need the manpower of SBYO to run the show."

"Last year we introduced a new system of abhishekam for Thai Pusam. We put in pumps to transfer the huge volume of milk from one point to another. The SBYO contributed to this improvement. They have also been instrumental in making Karttikeya Dipam a prominent annual event. Sometimes

the temple committee has to make a firm decision and request they abide by that, but during my tenure we have tried to give them whatever they have needed from us and support them in all possible ways. I do not know if the new management will have the same view as I have, but to me the SBYO are part and parcel to the running of the temple, and I very much value their contribution."

#### An Amazing Array of Services

Thandabaniy Subramaniam, 35, present SBYO chairman, describes current activities: "We have annual temple functions and ongoing services. The most important festival is Thai Pusam. Then we have Chitra Pournami, Karttikeya Dipam and Kanda Shashthi that we help organize. For the past seven years we have also conducted education seminars for all the Indian children who finish their exams and want to enter different universities for higher education. We also organize pilgrimage to other Murugan temples in Malaysia, visit other temples and interact with the other temple management committee persons and learn from them how they are managing the affairs of their temples. We also celebrate a festival connected to Lord Vinayaka, and we clean the temple steps be-



**Spreading love and light:** (right) SBYO volunteers reach out to handicapped youth and bring them to the temple to receive blessings. (below) the annual Karttikeya Dipam festival was once a small event at the temple, but the SBYO has brought it into prominence as a major annual festival, (right) lighting over 5,000 lamps from the base of the hill up the steps and through the temple (that's Georgetown in the background).

fore Skanda Shasthi. We help other Penang temples organize their kumbhabhishekams when they request assistance.

"Before the students take exams, we organize Kalvi Viratam, students fast and bring water to the temple for Muruga's abhishekam, and pray for His blessings in the studies. We also help our members who have a wedding in their family. If there is a death in the family of one of our members, we organize *atma shanti* prayers for the departed soul. We hold a family day get-together once a year, and we have a weekly badminton session in which our members participate. Some of our members work to help organize community athletic events. We help ISKCON when they organize their annual yatra. We serve in



charity homes of handicapped children and orphanages, and help with their painting and renovation. We organize Diwali and parties for them. We hold Vinayaka prayers annually for ten days. During that time, we invite underprivileged and handicapped children to join us, drive them in vans to the temple and give them donations. We even carry them up the steps to the temple during the Karttikeya festival. Every year we sell calendars to raise

funds. All our activities and finances are recorded and well documented, as we have to submit them to the registrar."

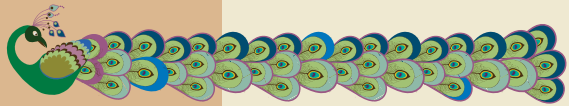
Shunmugam, SBYO chairman from 1992-2001, says, "Even before us, another group of volunteers was here. Our forefathers have given us this heritage which we want to pass on to our youth. Hinduism has taught us the way to live our lives. It has taught us to work in the service of mankind."

## Karttikeya Dipam—Manifesting Lord Murugan's Divine Light on Earth



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY SBYO





**S. Thandabaniy Subramaniam, 35**, current president of SBYO: Everything I am doing here is due to my devotion to Lord Muruga. I am able to do all my service work only with the cooperation of my family. I often reach home at 2 or 3 am when we are helping the temple organize the main festivals, and my wife understands. Ten years ago I was riding a motorcycle reciting Kandashasthi Kavacham when a mobike from the opposite side hit my mobike and then a car hit my mobike from the back. I had a miraculous escape. Since then I have a firm faith in Kandhashasthi Kavacham and recite it as often as possible, especially whenever I need protection.



**Nannthini Shunmugam, 25**, secretary of SBYO: I am deeply involved in the higher-education orientation seminars we conduct for our Hindu children who have passed their tenth- and twelfth-level classes and need guidance in shaping their future lives and careers. The youth have many opportunities, but the Indian community here is not aware of these. So we organize seminars twice a year after the exams, to help youth plan for their higher education. It gives me a lot of satisfaction and peace of mind to serve the Lord through SBYO.



**Yugavati Ananthan, 13**: I have been coming to the temple since the day I was born. I have been associated with SBYO since I was eight years old. Every Sunday I come here with my father and mother and I love it. I help the ladies cut vegetables, wash the staircase and clean the temple. I especially love to serve food when the community meal is being served to all the members. Lord Muruga has helped me a lot in my study and health.



**Neetiaashree Shunmugam**: My involvement with the temple and SBYO has given me a maturity, a way of talking to people, a way of thinking about things that are very different from my friends. I learned the value of selfless service when I saw people doing it here. Many youth today do not listen to their parents and they do not believe in God. They want to live life in an easy way. But life will bring many difficulties, challenges and obstacles. If you have faith in God, you invite positivity to yourself, and every struggle and obstacle will become easier to cross. He will hold your hand and make you face them confidently.

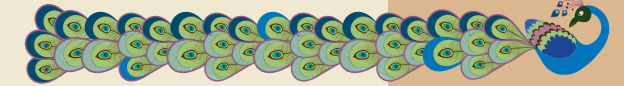
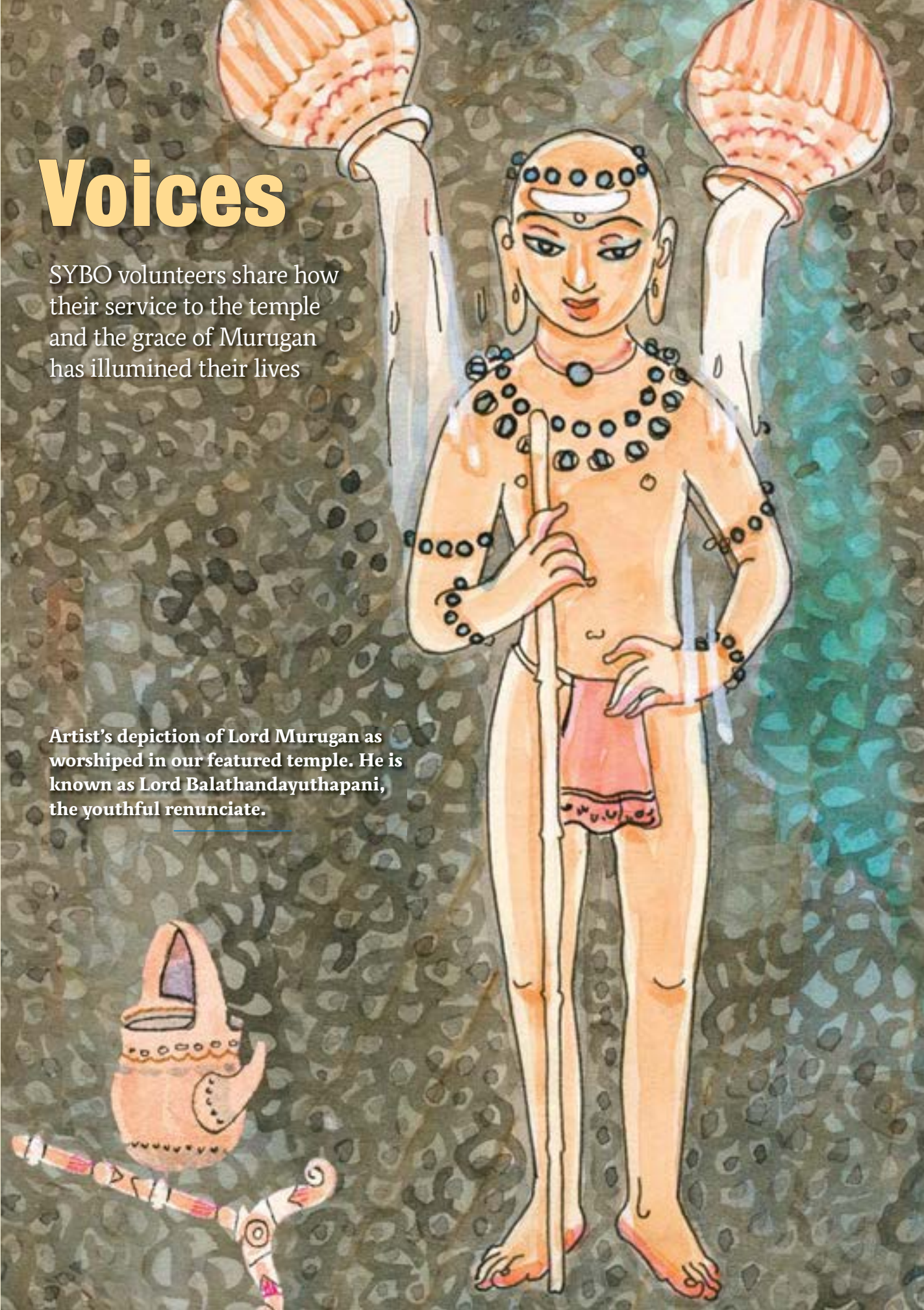


**Mathan Kalimuthu, 22**: Through SBYO I have developed a spiritual way of looking at life. I learned to walk on the right path and do good things. Other youth do not come here because their aim is to have fun in life. We have fun here too, but they do not understand this. Our seva will give us a lot of benefit in times to come, if not immediately. We will carry forward this good karma to our next birth. I appeal to parents to allow their children to join temples and do the service work. They need to understand what service and spirituality can bring to their lives.

# Voices

SYBO volunteers share how their service to the temple and the grace of Murugan has illumined their lives

Artist's depiction of Lord Murugan as worshiped in our featured temple. He is known as Lord Balathandayuthapani, the youthful renunciate.



**Chandrashekharan Dharmalingam, 63**, electronic engineer: I have seen many young people's lives transformed by their service work here. Many used to smoke and drink, and have stopped doing all this. I have become more devoted to Lord Muruga. I have also learned how to serve people, how to manage the crowd and even how to be nice to others and behave in a very courteous manner. I have tried to pass on all this knowledge to my two grown children, a daughter and a son.



**Mahendran, 43**, manufacturing technician: I lost my leg in a motorcycle accident at the age of 25, but I never gave up coming to the temple. When I am here I work as any other normal volunteer is working. I am happy to learn that other people take inspiration from a person like myself. I could have lost my life but Muruga saved me and I just lost my leg.



**Kumaraguru Boopalan, 65**, a founder member of SBYO, owner of a taxi service business: Due to poverty and some other factors I could not pursue my education after the age of 14. My friends and I used to have fights with other people. My astrology says I could have ended up in prison. After working here I learned how to control my temper and behave well. It is only with the blessings of Lord Muruga that I am on the right path in my life.



**Sivaneshvari Ananthan**: I have been working for SBYO for the past fourteen years. Lord Muruga has done so much for me. Once the doctor told me that if I undergo operation of my thyroid I will lose my voice. Then I came to Lord Muruga and cried before Him. After the operation my speech was found to be okay. I always bring my children with me. They learn to work with the other people as a disciplined team and learn to deal with them respectfully.

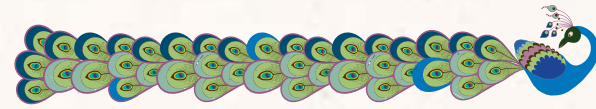
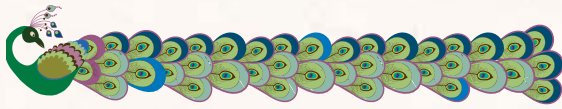


**Ananthan Visuvanathan, 49**, an SBYO founding member, banker: Kandhashasthi Vratam (not eating during the day, taking only one meal of milk and fruits in the evening) is very important for our spiritual evolution. Six days of fasting is much more intense than just praying in the temple or celebrating Thai Pusam on the streets by participating in the procession. Then our whole focus is on managing the crowd and serving them. But during Kandhashasthi it is about our own personal spiritual values and self purification.



**Ravindran Subramaniam, 48**, chef: I have been with SBYO for 28 years. It has helped us all keep away from bad habits. At a young age when many of us fall into bad company, most of our time was spent with noble and devoted souls. Lord Muruga has protected me many times. Once my family was evicted from our rental house. I and my family were in a very difficult situation and were literally crying. Suddenly an old lady appeared from nowhere, a complete stranger to us, and offered her house on rent, and our problem was solved in a miraculous manner.





## TEMPLE BUILDING

# Forty Priests Bring Twelve-Year Project to Completion

*Former temple chairman and surveyor, P. Kuvenaraju, a key figure in the new temple's construction, provides an account of the building process.*

THE NEW SITE FOR THE TEMPLE WAS A HILLY AREA FULL OF ROCKS. Despite this huge challenge, everyone wanted to work for the project. Starting with land clearing in 2000, we had to do a lot of rock blasting, cutting and filling. Site preparation alone took six years. Though the work was slower than we hoped, there were unusual positive events. Construction at an elevation of 105 meters is normally prohibited, but we got approval. Another time we had a major cave in. As I walked down the stairs, worried, I encountered a Chinese engineer who had a solution. He guided the contractor, resolved the problem and then disappeared. It is difficult for me to explain certain things. Our Lord Muruga here is very powerful. We needed to take machinery up through others' property. One person refused. But a North Indian man granted us the right of way.

After the contractor began work, I received a complaint. They were not working with the correct center. We finally located it. Had the construction begun before this, it would have been very difficult to correct the fault. The shift to the correct center placed the location of the pit for the bhumi puja over an area that was clear of rocks. This is another experience that made me realize that Lord Muruga was guiding us. The construction required us to lift up so much material—a lot of people were skeptical that we would ever complete the project. Finally, in 2006 we started the superstructure.

Another unusual feature of this temple was the group of 40 priests who performed the Maha Kumbhabhishekam. We had the renowned Picchai Gurukkal as our chief priest, priests from each of the six Murugan temples in Tamil Nadu and priests from around Malaysia. Fifteen *uttama panditas*—high priests—from Bali also

participated. They are expert in conducting rich, elaborate ceremonies. We were proud to be the first to give Hindu non-Indian priests from Indonesia such recognition.

Fund raising was another challenge. One committee member gave the seed capital of US\$30,000. A Chinese man paid 60% of the cost of the foundation, sub-structure earth filling and foundation. That alone cost \$235,000 ringets. In the end, the total cost of what we



MANI NADASON

accounted for receiving was over \$3.2 million including the cost of the Maha Kumbhabhishekam. Beyond this, many donated directly. An Indonesian Hindu couple spent \$300,000 to sponsor all the granite elements of the temple that came from Madurai. I went to India thinking we should be economical, but they told me to get the best. Someone from Kuala Lumpur paid for the Raja Gopuram. The cost for the priests was paid by one of our main donors. He took care of all their flights, lodging and boarding, etc. I think only Lord Muruga can give this kind of inspiration to somebody.

I have my own personal experiences with the healing powers of Lord Muruga here. Many of the devotees facing health problems undertake kavadis during Thai Pusam festival and come to Lord Muruga here. In fact, there is a popular perception that if you want wealth then go to Lord Muruga elsewhere but if you want health and healing then visit the Lord here. Our official figures are that 300,000 thousand devotees attended the Maha Kumbhabhishekam function."

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**From a field of rocks arises a palace:** (counterclockwise from above) P. Kuvenaraju; the new temple site after years of ground preparation; the ceremonious first stone laying ceremony, 2007; priests blessing murtis and kalasams during the Maha Kumbhabhishekam in 2012; huge crowds during the Maha Kumbhabhishekam.



COURTESY SBYO



THIGAMBARAM CHINNIAH

## From Shaping the Land to Installing New Golden Spires on the Tower



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(background) The main mandapam of Murugan's new Waterfall Temple abode with central sanctum still empty just before the Deity was installed. (inset clockwise from left) Humble brick and mortar construction of the temple sanctum towers are turned into masterpieces of temple sculpture by artisans from India. A view of the 513 steps with the old temple in view halfway down; the main murti of the temple, Sri Balathandayuthapani, fully decorated after puja.





SHUTTERSTOCK

## CULTURES

# Vietnam's Champa Kingdom Marches on

A rare look at the Balamon Cham, one of only two surviving non-Indic indigenous Hindu peoples in the world, with a culture dating back thousands of years

By VRNDAVAN BRANNON PARKER,  
LOS ANGELES

**T**HE CHAM HINDUS OF VIETNAM ARE AN almost forgotten people, remnants of the Cham dynasty which endured in the region now known as central Vietnam from the 7th century well into the 19th. Yet they are 60,000 strong, and they have kept their traditions alive for centuries, far from India's shores. Builders of cities named Indrapura, Simhapura, Amaravati, Vijaya and Panduranga, these Hindu people and their culture continue to flourish to this day. When we speak of the Champa people, it is not a trek through history; we are speaking of a living culture with roots going back thousands of years.

### Historical snippets

While today the Cham are Vietnam's only surviving Hindus, the nation once harbored some of the world's most exquisite and vibrant Hindu cultures. The entire region of Southeast Asia, in fact, was home to numerous Hindu kingdoms. The many magnificent temples and artifacts, from Angkor Wat to Prambana, remain as potent testimonials to

their splendor and accomplishments. These grand edifices still stand, though the societies around them no longer worship there or practice the lost traditions.

Champa was a formidable Hindu kingdom, renowned for its immense wealth and sophisticated culture. Its major port was Kattigara. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Claudius Ptolemy wrote of *Cattigara* and outlined it on his map of the world. Modern scholarship has confirmed *Cattigara* as the forerunner of Saigon (modern day Ho Chi Minh City). *Cattigara* was, in fact, the main port at the mouth of the Mekong River, a name derived from *Mae Nam Khong*, the Mother Water Ganga.

S. Swaminathan, author of a blog called *Ancient Sanskrit Inscriptions in Strange Places*, wrote, "The first Cham king that history knows is Sri Maran, identified as a Tamil ruler. The fact that a Pandyan king ruled Vietnam was missed by many historians. Translated into Tamil it is *Thiru Maran*. Several Pandyan kings by these names are spoken of in inscriptions and Tamil sangam literature. The oldest Sanskrit inscription discovered in Vietnam mentions the name of Sri Maran. The inscription is known as the

Vo-Canch inscription."

Another early Champa king was Bhadravarman, who ruled from 349–361 CE. His capital was the citadel of Simhapura or 'Lion City,' now called Tra Kieu. Bhadravarman built a number of temples, conquered his rivals, ruled well and in his final years abdicated his throne and spent his last days in India on the banks of the Ganges River.

Historic Champa was divided into five regions. Indrapura (present-day Dong Duong) served as the religious center of the kingdom; Amaravati is the present day Quang Nam province; Vijaya is now Cha Ban; Kauthara is the modern Nha Trang; and Panduranga is known today simply as Phan. Panduranga was the last Cham territory to be conquered by the Sino-Vietnamese.

Few know that Christopher Columbus, on his fourth and last voyage, had attempted to reach the Champa Kingdom and actually believed he had reached Vietnam. In ancient days well-worn trade routes had linked Europe with India and the entire region of South and Southeast Asia, and for countless centuries the wealth and wisdom of India had flowed to the markets and institutions



### Preserving old ways: (Opposite)

Women carry offerings on their head at Nha Trang temple; (right) celebrating the rainy season's three-day Kait Festival

of the world. By the 1400s, however, political instability had disrupted direct trade links with India and the West. Columbus was convinced that by sailing west from Spain he could circle the globe—a concept ridiculed by most Europeans, who still believed the Earth was flat—and thus find a new trade route and reestablish the long-lost link to the wealth of the East. His planned route would take him south along the Vietnamese coast, past the Cape of Kattigara and on to Malacca; he believed this to be the route Marco Polo had followed from China to India in 1292. Reaching Cariay on the coast of Costa Rica, he thought he had found Vietnam and was very close to one of his coveted destinations, the famous gold mines of the Champa Kingdom. Fortunately for Vietnam, he was mistaken.

Another Vietnamese Hindu kingdom was Funan, which flourished between the 1st and 6th centuries CE. Its capital was the Oc Eo Citadel. While exploring sea passages to India in the year 250 CE, two Chinese envoys, Kang Dai and Zhu Ying, described Funan as "having its own taxation system, ruled by a king in a walled palace." Professor Louis Malleret has unearthed much evidence of significant seaborne trade between Oc Eo, Persia and Rome.

### Vast Temple Complexes

In ancient times the Champa built vast temple complexes that remain standing to this day. Primarily dedicated to Lord Siva, these structures honor Lord Siva as the founder and protector of the Champa Dynasty. The most important of these is known as My Son, a Hindu religious and literary center. Originally, this temple complex featured 70 structures, of which 25 survive. Sadly, the main tower was severely damaged by American bombers in 1969 during the Vietnam War.

The Sivalinga was the primary form worshiped at My Son, its aniconic form also representing the divine authority of the Siva-empowered king. Today the Cham people continue to worship this form of Lord Siva.

The site of the ancient Son Tien Tu pagoda, atop Mt. Ba, is still considered to be one of the most spiritual and sacred places in all of Vietnam. There, on a three-meter-high granite rock, is the *ban chan tien*, a footprint belonging to a God who "set his footstep on soft land at the dawn of humankind." Located nearby is the recently opened Archaeology Museum of the Oc Eo Culture, designed to replicate a large Sivalingam and yoni. Its walls are lined with seated Ganesh murtis.



INRAJAYA

### Artifacts

Many Hindu artifacts of significant historical value have been found in Vietnam. In 2001, 320 gold plaques were discovered. Decorated with various Hindu divinities, such as Garuda, Narasimha, Kurma and Durga, these plaques have been identified as the earliest known Hindu iconographic images ever discovered in Southeast Asia.

Starting in the 1940s, many valuable Oc Eo artifacts have been unearthed, featuring statues and reliefs of Buddha, Ganesh, Vishnu, Durga and Siva in both His human and aniconic Linga form.

Many Vietnamese Hindu artifacts have been misidentified as Buddhist icons. One such example is the Bien Hoa Vishnu, which bears all the markings of Vishnu and is identified as such by the Sanskrit inscriptions on its back. This sculpture, dated to 100 CE, was commissioned by Prince Vijaya Klaun Nauk Champa in gratitude and as a symbol of Vishnu's blessings for his conquests over the Chenla. Lost for centuries and rediscovered 100 years ago, the Bien Hoa Vishnu has been worshiped ever since as Buddha by the local community.

In June, 2013, Vietnam's prime minister officially identified 30 National Treasures of Integral Import to the Nation. Among these are several Hindu artifacts, including murtis of Vishnu and Surya from the Oc Eo culture and of Durga and Siva from the Champa. The 5th Quang Nam Heritage Festival, held June 21, 2013, featured a Vishnu sculpture dated 3500 to 4,000 years ago. If this dating proves accurate, this sculpture would be the oldest known identifiably Hindu artifact in the world.

### Language and Script

The Vo-Canh inscription, among the oldest known Sanskrit inscriptions discovered in the region, is one of many discovered in modern times. The Da Rang River, the largest river valley in central Vietnam, boasts several such Sanskrit inscriptions, including one at its mouth. These riverside inscriptions often lay hidden beneath the waterline, only to be revealed during the dry summer months.

The Cham script is a descendent of the South Indian Brahmic Grantha script. Many Hindu stone temples of the Champa include both Sanskrit and Chamic stone carvings.



The various Cham communities use slightly modified versions of the script, although the Cham Muslims prefer to use the Arabic alphabet. During French colonial rule, both groups were forced to use the Latin script. Though the Cham script is still highly valued, and despite efforts to simplify the spelling, today few people are actually learning it.

While the Brahmic-based Cham language is still spoken by nearly 250,000 people, at one time Sanskrit was common for the educated. Interestingly, the spread of written Sanskrit in India seems to have nearly coincided with its use in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The evidence speaks of an ongoing vibrant Sanskrit-based Hindu civilization that was never handicapped by narrow ethnic or national limitations but rather was nearly global in scope.

### The Cham People Today

Today the Cham are spread throughout East Asia. They are predominantly Sunni Muslim in Cambodia, Shia Islam in China, and Buddhist in Thailand. A small number of the Vietnamese Cham (also known as the Eastern Cham) follow Islam and a relative few follow Mahayana Buddhism, but the majority are Hindu. These are called the Balamon (Brahman) people. It is claimed that 70% of the Balamon people are classed as kshatriyas.

Having survived the loss of their kingdom, the colonial tyranny of the French, the Vietnam War (during which an unknown number emigrated to France), Communist rule and economic mayhem, the Cham Balamon people and traditions are surprisingly intact. Their temples are still standing. Their festivals are still celebrated and the traditional Hindu ceremonies and worship continue. Life's passages, such as graduations, weddings, births and deaths, are still observed in accordance with the Hindu traditions.



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Along with the Balinese Hindus, the Cham Balamon represent the only remaining non-Indic populations of indigenous Hindus surviving today.

But the Cham are not immune to the problems of modern times. The young are focused on material well-being, with little time or commitment to ancestral ways. Although there are a few courageous efforts to protect and promote the rich traditions of Cham Hinduism, there is a long way to go.

The Cham Muslim community has been more successful in this respect. Strong cultural and financial ties have been developed

**Art and culture:** (left) Cham women dance in a temple courtyard; (right) an ancient Siva statue (originally ten-armed) from the My Son Temple in Vietnam, now displayed at the Guimet Museum in Paris, France

between the Cham Muslims, as motivated Islamic preachers travel among the Cham, inspiring faith, activism, unity and common cause between the Cham Muslims and the Umma, the overall global Islamic community.

### Interview with Cham Elders

During my exploration of Vietnam's persistent Hindu culture, I was fortunate to connect with Phu Trim. His nom-de-plume is Inrasara, rooted in the name of Indra the King of the Celestials. Inrasara is a Cham Balamon leader, scholar, author and elder. He has written many books and is a recognized expert on Cham culture. I also was assisted by Jaka, another Cham scholar and leader, and by his son Inrajaya, whose photographs accompany this article. My interview with them sheds light on their culture and people.

**What is the origin of the Balamon people?** The research has not come to a clear conclusion yet. Now it is said that we come from somewhere in Java. It is known that we built our culture from 3,000 to 5,000 years ago in our land.

**Tell us about the Balamon religion.** It is hard to decide if Balamon is a religion or just a system of beliefs. Though our ancestors have left us with the Hindu sculptures, yet history might have burned down all the textbooks. We have now only books or texts to show beliefs, stories of the kings, God and the performing of rituals.

**What is your most important festival?** It could be said it is our New Year, called Rija Nagar, or "the nation's festival." It is most important since it has common value and is celebrated by Ahier (Hindus) and Awal (Muslims), together with its very beautiful and philosophical dances.

**Are the Balamon traditions and culture popular among the young people?** Since there is no clear belief system, we can say that it is not popular, though the lifestyle, by which I mean artistic, joyful and spiritual,

is seen as popular.

**What connections do your people have with India, past and present?** Our kingdom at its very early stage, 192 CE, adopted Hinduism as its religion and had the trading connection ever since. But about a thousand years later, as the merchants stopped coming to Southeast Asia, its influence fell, replaced by the growing power of Islam. The Indian researchers and friends who have come to Phanrang to see the culture have said much Indian influence can still be seen today, especially in some of the beliefs and the Hindu temples.

**Do people still worship at the ancient Hindu temples?** Yes, we have four temples that are still worshipped in nowadays: Po Inu Nugar, Po Rome, Po Klaung Girai and Po Dam. As for My Son heritage, we have lost our land and so have not reached there since long ago, but that is still the holy ground that people would love to visit.

**What are the biggest challenges facing the Cham people?** Keeping our culture, language and traditions alive is generally the challenge from hundreds years ago, as the influence from Vietnam grows greater. Now not many young people know how to read or speak properly, or clearly understand our beliefs.

**What are the most treasured artifacts of the Cham?** The temples, or the small wooden frame kept by the three highest priests that represent the temples, are the most important. They are used when we need to perform rituals while we cannot reach the temples because of warfare.

**Are there any official efforts to protect and promote Cham dance, music and art?** There are none that officially teach or study Cham history and traditions. Anyway, the need is high since long ago. Now we have the Cham brand of the Vietnam Association of Ethnology, focusing on fostering social activities for Cham in Saigon. Also we have Cham language classes, and the Cham UNESCO formed that focuses on studies.



WIKIPEDIA

They are reaching out to more and more people, though the impact is still small in scale.

**What important projects are you part of in relation to the Cham Balamon people?** (Answer from Jaka) I have many personal projects that have brought impact and changes to the community, especially the Cham website to connect young people and share articles on Cham studies at [www.gilaipraung.com](http://www.gilaipraung.com). To name a few: teaching Cham language, traditional songs, Cham youth camps, write and perform small Cham-spoken plays.

**Is the Balamon religion Hinduism?** Yes, we can say so.

**Who is your favorite God and why?** For our forefathers and ourselves it is Siva, the true holy sage, the destroyer of untruths

who enlightens all followers.

**What is the long-term vision for your people?** As long as the language and culture are alive rather than vanishing, we shall be able to play a part in building a beautiful and colorful world.

### Looking to India

Hinduism continues to thrive in India, yet today it is only among the Balinese and Cham Balamon people that this once global expression of Hinduism survives unbroken. Vietnam, with its ancient and impressive Hindu heritage, has age-old ties with India. The Cham Balamon people continue to practice their venerable Hindu traditions and express a keen interest in visiting India to see the holy sites and meet with other dedicated Hindu activists.

In India, Hindus have developed many organizations and projects to preserve the traditions of their ancestors and to empower their youth with the wisdom and time-tested methodologies of their priceless heritage. The Cham Balamon are engaged in a similar struggle. Sharing the Hindu heritage and

ethos, holding the same dharmic outlook, the Vietnamese Hindu community is confronted by the same challenges being faced in India.

Today, as members of a global Hindu community, we are becoming more and more empowered by the technologies of this information age, which allow Hindus throughout the world to support each other in common cause. Our culture is worth preserving—and as Hindus, we know dharma is not optional. Dharmic based Hindu civilization, wherever found, is a testament to that which is best in humanity. As the 21st century dawns, the Hindus of Bali, Vietnam and the world look to India as both the epicentre and foundation of Hinduism. It is my hope that the Hindus of India and the world will rise up to the occasion. Surely then will dharma prevail. 🙏



BRANNON PARKER & INRASARA

**Living history:** (filmstrip left to right) Cham holy man dances in the temple compound; the extensive ruins of My Son Siva temple on the Eastern coast; Inrasara archiving temple ruins; lingam-shaped Archaeology Museum of the Oc Eo Culture at Mount Ba; Cham-style Lord Ganesha; Cham children learning from an elder

Author Vrndavan Brannon Parker, formerly initiated by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, studies and lectures on ancient civilizations and their relations to Vedic culture. Founding member of WAVES and owner of Vedic Empire Productions, he is the author of Orissa in the Crossfire and The Serpent, the Eagle, the Lion and the Disc.



# Anger Management



EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

## Ways to Tame Our Most Destructive Emotion



**F**urged by a fast-breaking car in front of him, a man loses control and crashes at an intersection; tempers flare and a fist fight breaks out. In a store nearby, a man stomps off in a huff, cursing the clerk for declining his credit card. In an apartment up the street, a mother screams at her daughter to clean up her room. Down the block, a schoolgirl pouts because her father won't let her date an older boy. Around the corner a man slaps his six-year-old son because he won't sit still in the car. Anger, the most powerful and hurtful emotion we possess, is everywhere. Yet, the average person succumbs to it helplessly, willingly, lapsing into insane episodes now and again without thinking much about it. Many would defend it as their ally, a tool they could not live without. Anger is expressed by humanity in drastically different manners. Low-minded individuals take delight in being angry toward others and expressing that anger in aggressive and violent ways—gang wars, school bullying, vandalism and more. They deliberately use anger and violence to get what they want. Then there is the mass of generally law-abiding people who live a normal, working life but are seriously angry on the inside about one thing or another and express that anger regularly in their words and actions. They are simply angry at the world and have neither the means nor the motivation to eliminate anger from their lives. They are, as a popular book observes, angry all the time. Finally, there are those who are striving to live a life according to spiritual principles but are at times unable to control their anger and as a result end up hurting others and breaching Hinduism's core virtue, nonviolence (ahimsa), while creating new negative karmas to live through in the future. It is to such individuals, who are striving to control anger, even eliminate it from their pattern of behavior, that this Insight is addressed.



# The Perils of ANGER

The Tirukural □ Chapter 31  
By Saint Tiruvalluvar, 200 bce

1 It is restraint that restrains rage when it can injure. If it cannot harm, what does restraint really matter?

2 Wrath is wrong even when it cannot cause injury, but when it can, there is nothing more evil.

3 Forget anger toward all who have offended you, for it gives rise to teeming troubles.

4 Anger kills the face's smile and the heart's joy. Does there exist a greater enemy than one's own anger?

5 If a man be his own guard, let him guard himself against rage. Left unguarded, his own wrath will annihilate him.

6 Anger's fire engulfs all who draw near it, burning even friends and family who risk rescue.

7 As a man trying to strike the ground with his hand can hardly fail, just as surely will one who treasures his temper be destroyed.

8 Though others inflict wrongs as painful as flaming torches, it is good if a man can refrain from inflammatory tantrums.

9 If hostile thoughts do not invade his mind, all his other thoughts may swiftly manifest.

10 As men who have died resemble the dead, so men who have renounced rage resemble renunciates.

## Anger and the Spiritual Path

To improve our understanding and control of anger, it is helpful to look at the concept of the threefold nature of man: 1) superconscious or spiritual, 2) intellectual or mental and 3) instinctive or physical-emotional. It is the instinctive, animal-like nature that contains the tendencies to become angry and harm others. The goal of living a religious life is to learn to control these animal instincts—as well as the ramifications of the intellect and the pride of the ego—and thereby manifest one's spiritual nature. Spiritual striving produces gradual improvement in harnessing and transmuting our instincts, intellect and ego, with the entire process of soul evolution spanning many lifetimes.

Anger is the base behavior of reacting to challenging situations by becoming frustrated and upset, even enraged to the point of lashing out with words or fists. Webster compares the terms for anger as follows: "*Anger* is broadly applicable to feelings of resentful or revengeful displeasure; *indignation* implies righteous anger aroused by what seems unjust, mean or insulting; *rage* suggests a violent outburst of anger in which self-control is lost; *fury* implies a frenzied rage that

borders on madness; *ire*, chiefly a literary word, suggests a show of great anger in acts, words, looks, etc.; *wrath* implies deep indignation expressing itself in a desire to punish or get revenge."

Learning to control anger is so essential to harnessing the instincts that the 2,200-year-old South Indian scripture on ethics, the *Tirukural*, devotes an entire chapter to the subject, shown above. It is, in fact, the chapter that precedes "Avoidance of Injuring Others"—the order of these chapters itself suggesting that to successfully practice nonviolence we need to first control anger.

The *Tirukural* warns that anger gives rise to teeming troubles. It kills the face's smile and the heart's joy. It burns even friends and family who try to intervene, and easily leads to injuring others. Left uncontrolled, it will annihilate you.

A few years ago we had a perfect opportunity to observe this fiery emotion. Two carpenters were building a house next door to the monastery. One, James, clearly more prone to anger than the other, would swear loudly and at length when something didn't work out right, sometimes every few minutes. About once a week, the two men would have a huge argument and James would drop his tools,

stomp off the job and drive away, his tires squealing in defiance. It was a powerful demonstration of how anger can become an accepted part of life for many people.

Swami Budhananda (1917–1983) of the Ramakrishna Mission noted in a series of talks published in *Vedanta Kesari*, [www.sriramakrishnamath.org](http://www.sriramakrishnamath.org): "The evil effects of anger are innumerable. The first thing that happens to an angry person is that he forgets the lessons of wisdom he has learned in life. After that, he loses control over his thoughts and emotions. He becomes overactive, with his highly charged ego as his only guide. He loses his power of discrimination, sense of proportion, and becomes aggressive in manner, hostile to his own welfare. When anger becomes the second nature of a person, physical health and equanimity of mind suffer, and inner peace vanishes in a trice. Anger can destroy friendships, families, business partnerships, professional prospects. Communal and ethnic riots, arson, wars, suicides, murder and many other forms of crime are basically products of anger. In fact, anger makes even a handsome person look ugly. I suggested to a friend, who is remorseful about his flashes of anger, that he keep a large mirror facing his office desk. In case the

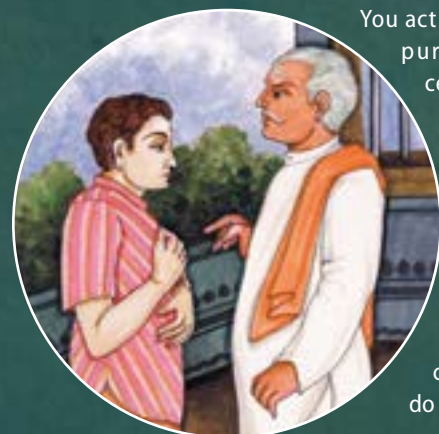
anger-prone person has a lively sense of humor, this mirror-therapy is likely to work."

People are not equally susceptible to anger. Some are usually calm, but occasionally flare up. Others anger easily. Many people are selective about whom they get angry with—perhaps just their spouse or daughter-in-law.

My Gurudeva, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, observed that anger is the most difficult fault to overcome because it manifests in so many different forms: pouting, long silences, shouting, yelling, swearing and more. In *Living with Siva*, he lists the eight forms of anger from the book *Angry All the Time* (see sidebar below): 1) sneaky anger; 2) the cold shoulder; 3) blaming and shaming; 4) swearing and yelling; 5) demands and threats; 6) chasing and holding; 7) partly controlled violence and; 8) blind rage. These are called the eight rungs on the ladder of violence, an analogy that Gurudeva found helpful in showing how anger can easily snowball. For example, an evening might start with a mild expression of irritability that seems harmless enough but soon escalates into shouting and swearing and culminates in physical cruelty.

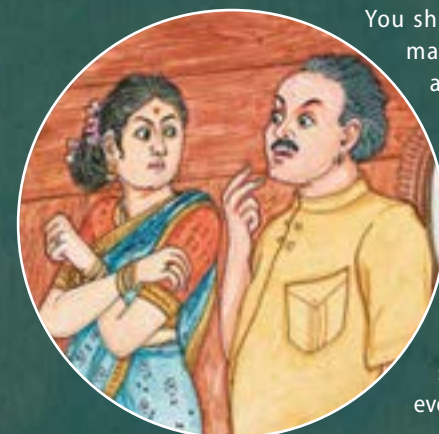
## Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Violence

### 1: Sneaky Anger



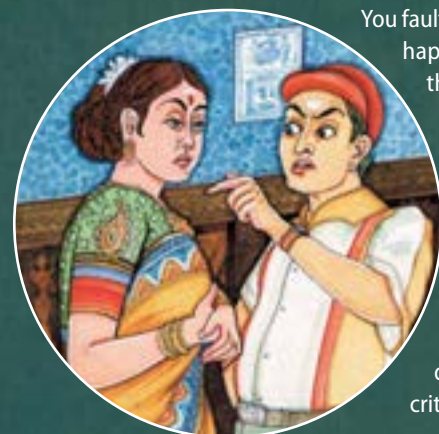
You act and speak normally but purposely neglect to do certain tasks others have asked you to do, pretending that you forgot all about the duties. Example: A teenage boy, upset with his father for firmly disciplining him, retaliates with sneaky anger by chronically "forgetting" to do his household chores.

### 2: The Cold Shoulder



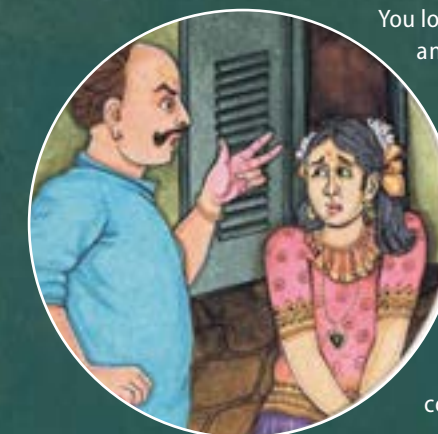
You shun another person and make it clear you are mad about something. However, you refuse to let him or her know what that something is. Example: A wife is upset with her husband for working late and, rather than talk the issue through, gives him the silent, cold shoulder for the entire evening.

### 3: Blaming and Shaming



You fault others for something that happened and then tell them they are "no good" in order to make them feel shame. Example: an employee makes a simple mistake at work, and her boss is upset. Rather than help resolve the problem, he points blame at her, demeaning and intimidating her with personal criticisms.

### 4: Swearing and Yelling



You lose control over your speech and scream and yell at others. Those who have a habit of swearing are most prone to this form of anger. Example: A teenage girl has admitted to a minor wrongdoing at school. Her teacher, known for his foul mouth, yells at her harshly, using cruel, out-of-control words to punish her.

"The chitta-vrittis, the thought-waves, which being gross, we can appreciate and feel. They can be more easily controlled, but what about the finer instincts? How can they be controlled? When I am angry, my whole mind becomes a huge wave of anger. I feel it, see it, handle it, can easily manipulate it, can fight with it; but I cannot succeed perfectly in the fight until I can get down to its causes." SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, RAJA YOGA



## Anger and the Chakras

Useful insights into the nature of anger and how to control it can be gained by relating it to the Hindu system of chakras, the subtle centers of consciousness within each individual (see sidebar to the right). There are seven primary chakras along the spinal column and in the head. When our awareness is flowing through these chakras, consciousness is in the higher nature. The seven chakras, or talas, below the spine, down to the feet, are seats of instinctive consciousness, the origin of fear, anger, jealousy, confusion, selfishness, absence of conscience and malice. Blind rage, the eighth rung on the ladder of violence described in *Angry All the Time*, corresponds to the second lower chakra, called *vitala*. Gurudeva explains, "Anger comes from despair or the threatening of one's self-will. When people are in the consciousness of this chakra, they are even angry at God. With their wrath, they often strike out at those around them, leaving a trail of hurt feelings behind them. From sustained anger arises a persistent, even burning, sense of resentment."

When someone goes into a blind rage, he drops far below the chakras of memory and reason—the muladhara and svadhishtana. Therefore, it is no wonder that afterwards he may not even remember what happened. His consciousness was totally in the vitala chakra, having given up the normal faculties of memory and reason.

Many people think that sneaky anger and the cold shoulder are natural and harmless. Gurudeva warned that, while they are not as vicious as yelling and screaming or throwing things, these expressions stimulate the lower chakras and over time can easily lead to more extreme outbursts, as well as the experience of other lower-chakra emotions, such as fear and jealousy. For these reasons, it is best not to indulge in sneaky anger or the cold shoulder. Sarcasm and cynicism can also be forms of anger. Gurudeva observed, "People who are cynical are expressing their anger and contempt with snide remarks. They may seem to be joking, but their sharp feelings come across anyway, which stimulates that lower chakra until one day their cynicism will turn into really good anger. Then they build up new karmas they never had before, which they will live with until they are faced with those karmas."

Swearing is even more problematic, as it stimulates the lower chakras to a greater degree than sneaky anger, the cold shoulder or

cynicism. Therefore, it is important in managing anger to break the habit of swearing.

### Step One for Conquering Anger

For those on the spiritual path who are striving to control anger, there is an important first step. That is to acknowledge that anger is a serious problem that easily leads to violence and is a quality that should be totally absent from those dedicated to making progress in their spiritual life.

I gave the following advice via e-mail to a devotee who was working to refrain from expressing occasional anger toward a parent: "Thank you for sharing the details regarding your angry encounters. I would suggest you reflect on the seriousness of disharmony in the home. It is taking a few steps backward in spiritual progress. When you do sadhana, you move forward. But if you become angry regularly, you step backward, and as a result you may end up standing still. It is like trying to save money for a special purpose. You save for a while, but then spend what you saved last month, which is like becoming angry and forfeiting the progress you made in your sadhana. By taking anger seriously, you will be motivated to avoid it at all costs."

The devotee recently e-mailed again saying the advice had helped her cope with the force of anger. She had taken the first step—acknowledging that it is a serious problem, an unacceptable mode of behavior for those on the spiritual path.

### Seven Remedies

With this resolve firmly in mind, she was ready to take the second step: to apply remedies to improve her behavior. On pages 46–49, in the illustrated sidebar, we offer seven remedies. The first is to affirm the Hindu perspective that everything in the universe is perfect; the entire physical, mental, emotional and spiritual flow of events is moving in perfect harmony and exquisite coordination according to the divine laws of karma and dharma. Each happening is as perfect as an ocean wave or a butterfly's wing. Anger is an instinctive-emotional protest to what is happening at a particular moment. "Things are just not right!" anger declares. The source of peace and contentment is the opposite sentiment—a wholesome, intelligent acceptance of life's conditions, based on the understanding that God has given us

a perfect universe in which to grow and learn, and each challenge or seeming imperfection we encounter is an opportunity for spiritual advancement. Gurudeva wrote: "We are all growing toward God, and experience is the path. Through experience we mature out of fear into fearlessness, out of anger into love, out of conflict into peace, out of darkness into light and union in God."

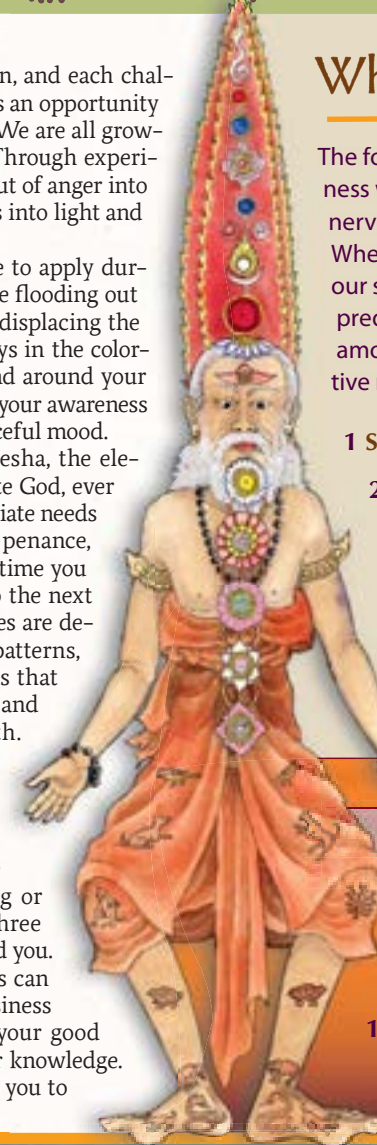
The second remedy is a first-aid technique to apply during angry outbursts. It is to visualize light blue flooding out from the center of your spine into your aura, displacing the blackish reds that anger automatically displays in the colorful field of subtle energy radiating within and around your body. Mystically, this has the effect of moving your awareness out of the angry state of mind into a more peaceful mood.

The third remedy is to worship Lord Ganesha, the elephant-faced Lord of Dharma, a compassionate God, ever available to assist embodied souls with immediate needs to further their evolution. Remedy four is a penance, setting aside a specified sum of money every time you experience anger. The fifth remedy is to skip the next meal if you become angry. These two sacrifices are designed to remold deep-seated subconscious patterns, called *vasanas*, convincing your subconscious that you are serious about controlling your anger and gradually subduing any occurrence of wrath. Remedy six, the flower penance, is a way of letting go of angry feelings that you hold toward another person. Offering flowers with a loving heart has the effect of dissolving the resentment and awakening forgiveness—be it toward a parent, spouse, employer, sibling or friend. The seventh remedy is to perform three kindly acts toward someone who has disturbed you. For a loved one or close acquaintance, the acts can be performed openly. For others, such as business associates, employers or fellow employees, your good deeds may be done subtly, even without their knowledge. It may be difficult to fulfill this, as it requires you to

## Wheels of Consciousness

The fourteen chakras are centers of force and consciousness within the inner bodies of man—with corresponding nerve plexuses, ganglia and glands in the physical body. Where we reside in the range of chakras deeply influences our state of mind, our actions and reactions. Anger is the predominant consciousness of the *vitala chakra*, second among the seven lower chakras, all of which are instinctive realms of distress, darkness and confusion.

- 1 SAHASRARA... Illumination—CROWN OF HEAD
- 2 AJNA... Divine sight—THIRD EYE
- 3 VISHUDDHA... Divine love—THROAT
- 4 ANAHATA... Direct cognition—HEART
- 5 MANIPURA... Willpower—SOLAR PLEXUS
- 6 SVADISHTHANA... Reason—BELOW NAVEL
- 7 MULADHARA... Memory—BASE OF SPINE
- 8 ATALA... Fear & lust—HIPS
- 9 VITALA... Raging anger—THIGHS
- 10 SUTALA... Retaliatory jealousy—KNEES
- 11 TALATALA... Prolonged confusion—CALVES
- 12 RASATALA... Selfishness—ANKLES
- 13 MAHATALA... Consciencelessness—FEET
- 14 PATALA... Malice & murder—SOLES OF FEET

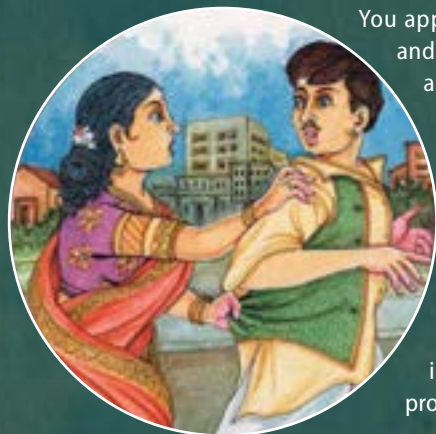


## 5: Demands and Threats



You demand that others behave as you want them to or threaten you will do something drastic if they don't, such as hurt them or yourself. Example: An argument between two business partners gets out of hand and reaches the point where the younger threatens to beat up the associate unless he gets his way.

## 6: Chasing and Holding



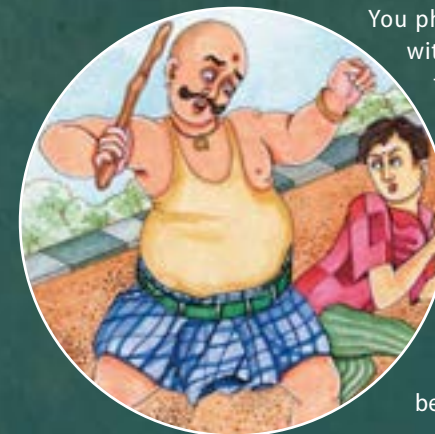
You approach or pursue others and physically restrain them against their will and prevent them from leaving your presence. Example: A woman's fiancée has been accused of seeing another woman. Incensed, she follows him to work, grabs him desperately and insists they talk about the problem right now.

## 7: Partly Controlled Violence



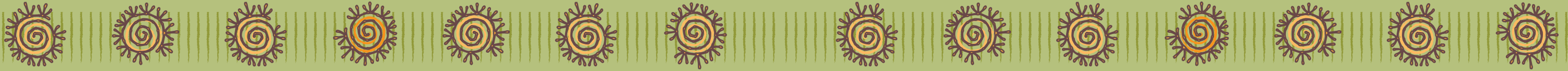
You physically strike someone for the purpose of forcing him or her to do what you want, but without losing control. Example: A young boy is caught stealing at a neighbor's home. The owner, outraged, confronts the boy and swats him several times with a stick, wrongly thinking this will reform the errant youth.

## 8: Blind Rage



You physically attack a person with total loss of control, to the extent that when you return to normal consciousness, you may not even remember the incident. Example: A sassy teenager deliberately insults an overweight stranger. Instead of just scowling, the fiery man flies into a rage and beats the boy mercilessly.





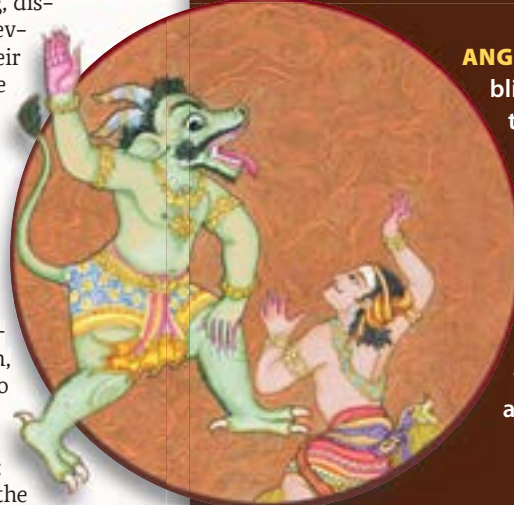
go against the instinctive compulsion to hold on to hard feelings. But acting kindly toward offenders releases you from the grip of seething anger, as surely as the sun dispels a morning fog, dissolving it in the light of higher consciousness. The seven remedies are designed to help seekers objectify their anger, to see it in a clear, detached manner, as a force that they have the power to harness and transmute into higher forms of expression and ultimately be free of it altogether.

#### Diet and Ayurveda

What we eat influences our state of consciousness and where we are in the chakras more than most people realize. The Hindu ideal of following a strict vegetarian diet has many benefits, including lessening the tendency to become angry. Eating meat, fish, fowl and eggs, on the other hand, opens the door to lower consciousness and makes it harder to stay out of the lower states. Temperament is largely a matter of food. The *Chandogya Upanishad* (7:26.2) teaches: "When the food is pure, mind becomes pure. When the mind becomes pure, memory becomes firm. And when a man is in possession of a firm memory, all the bonds which tie him down to the world are loosened." A vegetarian diet helps put us in touch with our higher consciousness and is therefore helpful in increasing our control over anger, as well as the other lower states of mind.

In the healthcare industry, anger is viewed as an insidious malady that, if not harnessed, leads to serious illness, causing high blood pressure, various diseases and even fatal heart attacks. It is addressed with prescription drugs, aromatherapy, massage and homeopathy. The Hindu medical science, ayurveda, views anger as a primary sign of imbalance of the three bodily humors, known as

## Anger's Incendiary Threat ...



**ANGER:** "I will make the people blind and deaf. I will overpower them with wrath and suffocate them with rage. I will catch hold of even wise men. They shall neither harken to what concerns their own happiness, nor reflect what they had read in the scriptures. In a moment I can destroy even the learned, the famous, those who are attentive to duties, the charitable

## ... with Retorts from Patience, Universal Love & Discrimination

and the mighty potentates. I can infuse fury, resentment, wrath, indignation into the minds of all in the twinkling of an eye. I am very powerful. I will disturb the tapas of the aspirant and even yogis and destroy serenity. **ATMAN**, the soul, despaired, "Alas, who will help me now?" **KSHAMA**, the virtue of Patience, spoke up: "I

will! I will pull out the venomous tooth of this demon, Anger." **VISHVAPREMA**, Universal Love, cried out, "I will! I am the water to quench the fire of anger." Finally, **VIVEKA**, Discrimination, roared: "I will! When I rise, anger dies."

**Swami Sivananda (1887-1963)**  
founder, Divine Life Society

Ayurvedic medicine also advises cooling foods and environment."

Dr. Vasant Lad, director of the Ayurvedic Institute ([www.ayurveda.com](http://www.ayurveda.com)) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers basic remedies for anger in *The Complete Book of Ayurvedic Home Remedies*:

"Pitta is necessary for right understanding and judgment, but when it gets disturbed or out of balance, it creates misunderstanding and wrong judgment, leading to anger and hostility. Here are several simple home remedies to cool down that hot pitta and keep tempers under control.

"Diet: Perhaps most important, a person who becomes angry easily or often should follow the pitta-pacifying diet, especially avoiding hot, spicy and fermented foods, citrus fruit and sour fruit. Favor simple, bland foods and cool drinks, and avoid alcohol and drinks with caffeine.

"Keep cool: It's also not recommended for people with a pitta body type to take saunas or steam baths, to get overheated from exercise or sports, or to be in too much direct sun.

"Oil massage: Rub some bhringaraj oil or coconut oil on your scalp and on the soles of the feet. That will help to bring down the excess pitta. You can do this every night before getting in bed to regularly moderate pitta.

"Sandalwood oil: Another simple and effective way to help balance your emotions is to place a drop of sandalwood essential oil on the third eye area between your eyebrows, as well as on the throat, breastbone, navel, temples and wrists.

"Herbal teas: Take ½ teaspoon of chamomile and 1 teaspoon of

*doshas*. Dr. Virender Sodhi ([www.ayurvedicscience.com](http://www.ayurvedicscience.com)) of Bellevue, Washington, explained, "Anger is under the control of the *pitta* dosha. Pitta is intelligence, anger, digestion, fire, sight and so on. At the mental level, we have four drives: anger, attachment, ego and desire for sex. Although all these are normal animal behaviors,

imbalance in these leads to imbalance of their respective doshas. Just as attachment increases *kapha*, anger increases pitta. Imbalance in pitta dosha can cause excessive anger, liver maladies, hypertension, etc. Balance is achieved by calming yoga, *shitali pranayama*, walks, mantra, self analysis and diverting the anger into a different form.

# Seven Remedies for the Habit of Anger

**H**ave you ever suggested to someone who was furious at you that he shouldn't get so angry? Perhaps you offered, "It certainly doesn't make me feel good when you unleash that force on me! And it's not good for you either!" What was the result? He just got madder, right? "How dare you tell me not to get angry, you #%\*\$! !" The point is, no one can change a person except that person himself. We only change when we want to change. Are you ready? Controlling anger could well be viewed as the first exercise in spiritual life, because it stands so squarely between the soul and peace of mind while living in a physical body. Nothing is more fundamental to conquer, and doing so unleashes great energy and provides emotional stability for all other endeavors. Yes, it is work, but work well worth the effort. So, here are some sharp tools—powerful enough to make even a nice person nicer. They are philosophical, penitential, metaphysical, devotional and psychological. Use them to improve your life, and the life of everyone you know.

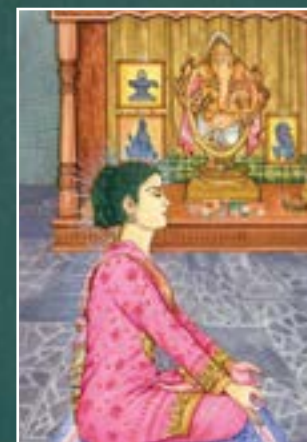
## 1: Affirm: Everything Is Perfect!



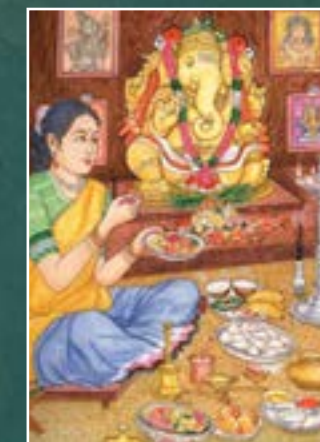
From a mountaintop perspective, God is everywhere, in all things, and everything is in a state of balance and perfection at every point in time. Affirm this Hindu wisdom regularly to cultivate patience and wise acceptance, even of situations that tend to arouse anger. To do so, be seated, close your eyes, breathe deeply and affirm quietly to yourself, "I'm all right, right now, and everything is as it should be from a mountaintop point of view."

"When your subconscious has been cleared of past reactionary patterns and reprogrammed thoroughly, you do not take exception to things that happen in the world. In understanding, you love everyone and embrace every event. You intuitively sense just what they are all going through, because you have in your memory banks knowledge of each happening acquired during all the lives you have ever lived." **SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIYASWAMI**

## 2: Fill Your Aura with Light Blue 3: Worship Lord Ganesha



If you are overtaken by anger and resentment—emotions which fill your aura with blackish red, streaked with yellow—sit in meditation, breathe and visualize light blue entering your aura and surrounding your body. The blue will neutralize the fiery reds, and before you know it the anger and resentment will be gone. Simply relax and visualize soothing blue radiating out from the center of your spine, flooding your inner and outer aura.



The worship of Lord Ganesha is helpful in overcoming all emotional problems, including anger. As He is seated on the *muladhara* chakra, tuning in to His *shakti* helps raise us up into the *muladhara* chakra and therefore out of anger and fear into a calm, stable state of mind. In fact, you can slowly seal off the lower states of mind and keep awareness permanently lifted above fear and anger through the regular worship of Lord Ganesha.



# Sagely



## Reflections

I will permit no man to narrow  
and degrade my soul by  
making me hate him.

*Booker T. Washington*

If you are patient in one moment  
of anger, you will escape a  
hundred days of sorrow.

*Chinese proverb*

Nor he who owns the least of things,  
nor he whom anger chains, can  
ever pass through maya's gates.  
So, give these up, sanniyasin bold!  
Say "Om Tat Sat, Om!"

*Swami Vivekananda*

There is nobody who lives  
happily with anger.

*Shantideva*

When we speak with hatred and  
anger, it leads to unhappiness,  
pain and misery. So one should  
always be soft spoken.

*Yajur Veda 3, 54*

If we could read the secret  
histories of our enemies, we  
should find sorrow and suffering  
enough to disarm all hostility.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Suppose you have a weakness of  
getting angry easily. Now, what you  
should do is this: Once you become  
normal again, go and sit in the family  
shrine room if you have one, or sit in  
solitude; then regret and repent your  
own anger and sincerely pray to your  
beloved Deity or to Mother Nature,  
seeking help to get rid of it.

*Shri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi*

To remove anger is not so difficult  
as to decide to remove it and  
to maintain that decision.

*Sri Aurobindo*

There should be no yelling in the  
home unless there is a fire.

*David O. McKay*

A nagging sense of discontent, a  
feeling of being dissatisfied, or of  
something being not right, is the fuel  
that gives rise to anger and hatred.  
Generally, this discontent arises  
in us when we feel that either we  
ourselves, or someone we love, or  
our close friends are being treated  
unfairly or threatened: people are  
being unjust toward us or our close  
friends.... The idea is to stop it at

an early stage, rather than wait for  
that anger or hatred to arise fully.

*The Dalai Lama*

Resentment is like taking poison and  
hoping the other person dies.

*Augustine of Hippo*

Worshippers of Siva who are victim to  
anger or hatred refrain from medita-  
tion, japa and kundalini yoga. They  
confess sins, do penance and engage  
in bhakti and karma yoga to raise  
consciousness. Aum Namah Sivaya.  
*Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami*

fresh, finely chopped cilantro leaves and steep them in 1 cup hot water for about 10 minutes. Allow this tea to cool before you drink it. You can drink it three times a day, after each meal.

"Ghee nasya: Dip your little finger into a jar of brahmi ghee (or plain ghee) and lubricate the inside of your nostrils with a small amount. (Make sure your nails are trimmed so you don't scratch yourself.) Then gently inhale the ghee upward. This sends a calming message to the brain.

"Shitali pranayama: Make a tube of your tongue; breathe deeply through your mouth down into your belly, hold the breath for a few seconds; exhale through your nose. Do about 12 repetitions.

"Yoga postures: Good yoga asanas for pitta include the camel, cobra, cow, boat, goat and bridge poses. Avoid the headstand or other inverted poses, such as the plow and shoulder stand.

"Meditate: There is an ancient method of meditation that involves watching your every emotion come and go, without either naming it or trying to tame it. As the feelings arise, breathe deeply and exhale the emotions out."

### Anger and Spiritual Striving

Anger is a natural emotion, a protective function of the instinctive mind, not to be vilified or feared. It is a part of our nature, and it is normal to express it—that is, if we are content to live at the instinctive level of our being, which many people are. But each soul inevitably reaches a point where it seeks to harness the natural instincts. Gurudeva explained, "Anger is also, like fear, an instinctive control, and at one time served its purpose. The onrush of anger served to protect man's private interests in critical situations by injecting adrenaline into his blood and thus preparing him for defense. But as man evolves closer to his real, actinic being, he discovers that actinic love, understanding, compassion and wisdom are higher qualities than anger."

Managing anger is vital for anyone who seeks success at sophisticated endeavors and stable, wholesome relationships. For aspirants seeking self-transformation on the spiritual path, it is absolutely essential, for only when the lower nature is subdued can the divine nature be fully expressed. Daily spiritual efforts designed to bring forth

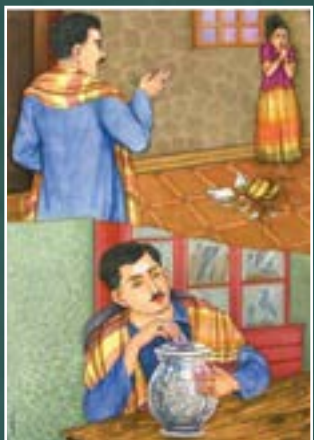
the divine nature are known as sadhana, such as japa, meditation and yoga. As Gurudeva wrote, sadhana, spiritual discipline, is "the mystical, mental, physical and devotional exercise that enables us to dance with Siva by bringing inner advancement, changes in perception and improvements in character. Sadhana allows us to live in the refined and cultured soul nature, rather than in the outer, instinctive or intellectual spheres." But, Gurudeva warned, every time you become angry, you destroy one month's worth of spiritual striving and practice, or sadhana. So, if you don't control anger, performing sadhana is a waste of time. Hence, the number-one sadhana is anger management.

Gurudeva is adamant that seekers refrain from any serious meditative practices until anger and other lower emotions have been harnessed. "Those who remain prone to anger should not do raja yoga or any form of intensive mantra, japa or pranayama amplification of the energies into higher chakras—lest that collective energy plummet into the corresponding lower chakras and be vented through fear, anger and jealousy. Rather, they should perform the always healing vasana daha tantra [writing down and burning recollections of the

past] and confine themselves to karma yoga, such as cleaning in and around the temple and picking flowers for the pujas. These simple acts of *charya* [humble service] are recommended, but should not be extended to intense worship. Then, and only then, their life will be in perspective with the philosophy of Sanatana Dharma and begin to become one with Siva's perfect universe. Brahmadvaya, the door to the seven chakras below the muladhara, will then be sealed off as their experiential patterns settle into the traditional perspective of how life should be and each individual should behave within it."

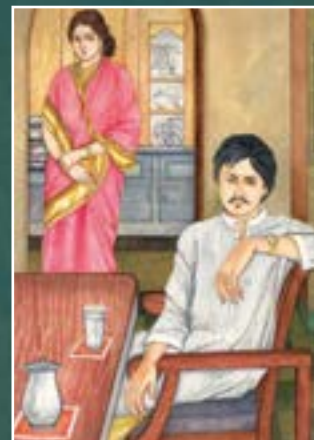
When working to harness the instinctive nature, what is it that tells us how well we are doing? It is the subtle irritation, the seed of wrath, that precedes every form of anger, from the cold shoulder to blind rage. Viewed in this way, the impulse to anger is—at the beginning of the path, the intermediate stages and even subtly at the upper reaches—our astute teacher, signaling to us each split-second the opportunity to be more patient, more understanding, more compassionate and to find a better way to cope with tense situations and keep closed the door to the lower chakras.

## 4: Pay for Each Burst of Ire



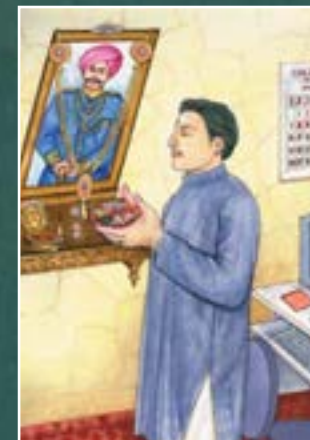
An effective and practical financial remedy is to put a sum of money, such as five dollars, in a jar each time you become angry, and later donate that money to a favorite orphanage or temple. Consistently performed, this penance soon makes it too expensive to get angry! This remedy impresses the subconscious mind that expressions of anger have karmic costs, and that anger can be completely eliminated by sincere efforts to overcome it.

## 5: Don't Eat the Next Meal



For those who can easily afford to put five dollars in a jar frequently, an alternate penance is fasting. Each time anger arises, simply skip the next meal. Denying yourself a meal has a potent impact, deeply impressing your subconscious mind. If you follow this without fail, the instinctive nature soon catches on that whenever it expresses anger it will soon experience hunger, and in this way is motivated to better control this destructive emotion.

## 6: Offer Flowers



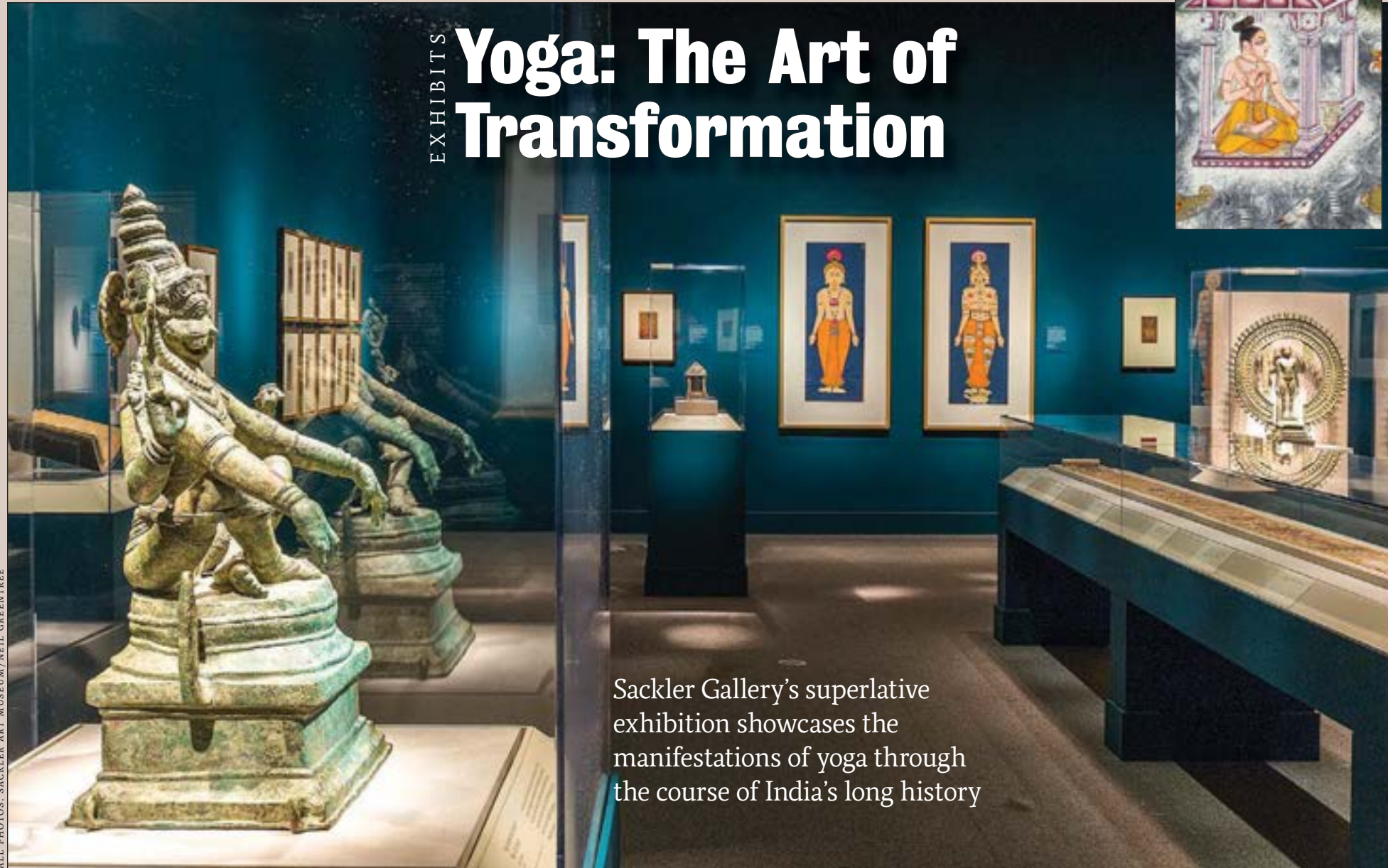
Put up a picture of the person you are angry with and for 31 days place a flower in front of the picture. While doing so, sincerely offer the person your forgiveness in heart and mind. If it becomes difficult to offer the flower of forgiveness, because hurtful memories come up from the subconscious mind, write down the memories and burn the paper in a trash can. Say, "I forgive you, for I know that you gave back to me the karma that I set in motion."

## 7: Perform Three Kindly Acts



If you have gotten upset with another person, do three kindly acts to make up for it. This releases you from your anger and guilt even if he or she is unaware of your good deeds. Example: Returning from a hard day at work, a husband shouts abusively at his wife. After apologizing, he takes her dining to a place of her choosing, buys her an item that she needs for the kitchen and gives her some free time by taking care of the younger children for a half-day.

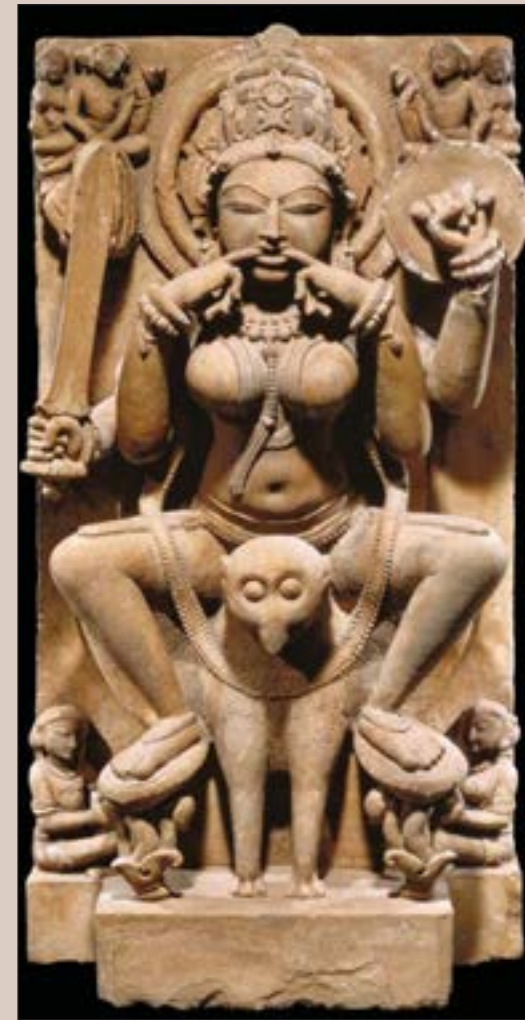




ALL PHOTOS: SACKLER ART MUSEUM/NEIL GREENTREE

# EXHIBITS Yoga: The Art of Transformation

Sackler Gallery's superlative exhibition showcases the manifestations of yoga through the course of India's long history



**Spiritual art:** (clockwise from left) main exhibit hall features an 13th century bronze of Yoga Narasimha with (at back) "Chakras of the Subtle Body" from Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati, 1824; (inset) Gaur Malhara Ragini as a yogi; sandstone "whistling" yogini, 11th century, from Kannauj; "Krishna Visvawrup"—Krishna's universal form

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

**B**UT ISN'T YOGA AN ENGLISH WORD?" This was the plaintive response one American had when she was told that yoga's original birthplace was India. Indeed, this ancient practice from India has traveled so far and been so cut off from its moorings that many current-day practitioners in the West seem to think it was always a part of American life.

Yoga has become a multibillion-dollar industry with everything from yoga studios to yoga gear to yoga tourism. There's even doga for dogs and, yes, there's chair yoga for older individuals and even baby yoga. For many in this commercialized, quick-fix world, yoga has been severed from its ancient roots.

Now comes a comprehensive art exhibition in America, the first of its kind, which through the language of visuals—paintings, sculptures and photographs—traces yoga's roots back to India, back to Gods and Goddesses, back to spiritual and philosophical aspirations.

After all, what can be more telling than seeing Narasimha, the mighty God Vishnu in his half man-half lion avatar, sitting in a relaxed asana, with a *yogapatta* (known as a yoga strap to today's yogis) around his crossed legs! Yoga Narasimha is a bronze Chola masterpiece from Tamil Nadu that dates back to 1250 CE. The sacred text *Bhagavata Purana* relates that Vishnu came down to earth to protect his young devotee Prahlada

and taught him bhakti yoga to make him invincible against his demon-father. Yoga Narasimha is as far away as one can get from modern-day, strip-mall yoga, but now's a chance to get a darshan of this mighty yogi.

Finally, the dots are being connected between past and present: "Yoga: The Art of Transformation," in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, brings over 133 rarely seen pieces of sculpture, paintings and photographs gathered from 25 museums on three continents to trace out a visual history of yoga. The exhibition's organizer is Dr. Debra Diamond, Associate Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

After closing in DC in January, the exhibition moved to San Francisco Asian Art Museum in SF from February 21–May 25 and to Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland from June 22–September 7. The 332-page accompanying catalogue ([bit.ly/SacklerCat](http://bit.ly/SacklerCat)) contains essays by noted scholars on several aspects of yoga and offers many insights into the individual works of art.

The earliest literary references to yoga, writes David Gordon White in one such essay, are found in the circa 15th century BCE *Rig Veda*, in which yoga meant neither meditation nor the seated posture but a war chariot yoked to a team of horses. (The Sanskrit word *yoga* is linguistically linked to the English *yoke*.) The association of yoga with

meditation is described in the Hindu *Katha Upanishad* (third century BCE): "We read that the disciplined practitioner who has 'yoked' the 'horses' and 'chariot' of the body and senses with the 'reins' of his mind rises up to the world of the Supreme God Vishnu."

"Deeply meaningful to Indians who cherish it as their legacy and to practitioners around the world who recognize its transformative potential, it also lies at the center of heated debates over authenticity and ownership," notes Julian Raby, the Director of the Sackler and Freer Galleries of Art. "Shining a light on yoga's manifold visual expressions, the exhibition does not define a singular yoga or determine authenticity. Rather, it aspires to enrich dialogue and inspire further learning

about yoga's profound traditions and enduring relevance."

I traveled from New York to Washington DC to catch this exhibition firsthand and got the opportunity to see it in three different ways—first a walkthrough with Dr. Diamond, then on my own and finally as part of a docent-led tour. During the latter, I was able to talk to strangers who had come together to delve into 2,000 years of yoga.

Such has been the buzz in the media that thousands have visited the galleries. On this closing weekend the space was inundated with crowds, mostly Westerners. When the docent asked how many practiced yoga, nearly all hands shot up. Yoga has become a part of American life and seems to have been





**Lampooning the missionaries:** “How to Make Converts,” 1816, by Thomas Rowlandson.

(left balloon) “Infidels. Barbarians! we are come to convert you to the christian faith. By order of the great Authority whose Image I bear on this Shield the benignant beams of whose countenance enliven the ignorant inhabitants of this country. Therefore destroy your Gods, burn your books, be converts and be saved.”

(right balloon): “Master. You very fine gentleman got very fine Topy [hat]—but not speak too much good sense. Master I’m poor people all black fellow poor Man all Master slave—What for burra sahib [big man] behauden [obliged-Scottish] send Master for black man not become christian businef [business] got one God already. What can I say more?”



ALL PHOTOS: SACKLER ART MUSEUM/NEIL GREENTREE



proudly appropriated by all people. Some recalled learning yoga back in the fourth grade!

Bringing together these works of art under one roof was no easy task, taking over five years. It was a labor of love for Diamond, who is herself a yoga practitioner. She says it was a huge scholarly enterprise which brought together experts from history, art, anthropology, religion and Sanskrit to examine the rich archives of many museums. Diplomacy, advance planning and ample funds were required to borrow these great treasures. Even to move a single sculpture requires expensive insurance and a courier to travel with it. While the Smithsonian provided some funding, the majority had to be raised from corporations, foundations and individuals. Diamond also used the new method of crowdfunding, where small online donations of even \$25 from ordinary people really added up, in this instance to \$175,000.

This exhibition provides a visual map for the story of yoga. In her catalog essay, Diamond explains: “Treatises and commentaries written between the third century BCE and the present day offer a coherent overview of yoga’s philosophical depth and developments. In contrast, objects and images emphasize how yoga, despite the inherently individual experience at its core, has always been embedded in culture. Made by professional artists working for sectarian groups, royal and lay patrons, or within commercial networks, these artworks are situated at the interface of yogic knowledge and received visual traditions and the interests of diverse communities.”

Yoga definitely began in India, with influences ranging from Hindu to Buddhist to Sufi, and in varied text and languages. As Diamond notes, “Created over some two millennia in diverse religious and secular con-

texts, these works open windows onto yoga’s centrality within Indian culture and religion, its philosophical depth, its multiple political and historical expressions and its trans-sectarian and transnational adaptations.” She adds, “While most objects emerged out of Hindu contexts or depict Hindu practitioners, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh and Sufi images illuminate patterns of trans-sectarian sharing.”

### Taking the Tour

It is appropriate that in the very first gallery the exhibition pays homage to the ancient divine and human teachers of yoga, emphasizing their role in spreading the tradition. A marble sculpture of a sublime Jina from Rajasthan, 1160, highlights the power of meditation. Three life-size sculptures of fierce tantric yoginis from a South Indian temple were reunited just for this exhibit.

The path of yoga is shown through manifestations of Siva, Nath Siddhas, Jain and Buddhist yogis. Many artworks are devoted to that great yogi Lord Siva. As the gallery on the path of yoga shows, “The Hindu traditions known as Saiva are based on the teachings of the Deity Siva; their texts are known as *Tantras* and *Agamas*. Bhairava and Sadasiva are two of the manifestations of Siva. Three sculptures show Siva as Bhairava. Yet another shows the Five-Faced Siva and Siva as Sadasiva. Explains Diamond: “In the large corpus of texts known as the *Bhairava Tantras*, He reveals the teachings of yoga and prescribes initiation rituals in which adepts become immortals with unlimited powers.”

Sadasiva, one of Siva’s most transcendent forms, figures in several yoga traditions. Within the Agamic texts of orthodox Saivism (Saiva Siddhanta), He is the Supreme Deity, a higher level of the cosmos in which there are no distinctions among person, body

and world.

The artworks I found most compelling were four paintings gathered under the title of the Cosmic Body, depicting the ultimate reality which is the goal of yoga—the equivalent of the Self and the Absolute.

A painting from Bilaspur, ca. 1740, reveals the magnificence of Krishna Vishwarupa, who is known as Yogeshwara or the Lord of Yoga. Indeed, the *Bhagavad Gita* presents a spectrum of yogic practices and doctrines within a framework of personal devotion to Krishna. In this watercolor, the Lord reveals himself to Arjuna, the warrior prince, in his awe-aspiring cosmic form with sixty multicolored heads and forty-four arms. The accompanying text helps us to understand the depth of the painting: “Within the golden dhoti that wraps around His waist, a miniaturized mountain landscape conveys—through the juxtaposition of scale—both Krishna’s vastness and his supremacy over all other Hindu Gods and sages.”

The gallery “Yoga in the Indian Imagination (1570–1830)” showcases paintings and manuscripts created in Hindu and Islamic courts. The earliest known treatise to illustrate yoga poses is the *Bahr-al-Hayat* (*Ocean of Life*, 1600–1604), of which ten folios are included in the exhibit. Yoga and yogis were very much a part of life in ancient and medieval India, and the richness of that depiction can be seen from many Hindu, Jain and Buddhist, as well as Sufi and Mughal, texts, folios and albums. There is a 12-foot-long elaborate illustrated chakra chart or scroll from Kashmir (18th century) which lays out 12 chakras and seven underworlds, and other yoga treatises showing the role of rulers in creating a visual archive of yoga.

Folios from the *Kedara Kalpa* show yogis in pilgrimage and worship. “Five Sages in

Barren Icy Heights” is an intriguing folio, ca 1815, which etches five ascetics in the snowy abode of Siva, examining and touching a large crescent moon, the emblem of Siva, among other scenes (above right).

The Ragamala paintings feature the renunciation of yogis as a foil to the allure of the materialistic life. In Bhairava Raga, from the Chunar Ragamala (ca. 1591), you have Siva the yogi with ashes smeared on His body and a yogapatta around His legs, strumming a veena. Around Him are all the seductions of the material world. Writes Molly Emma Aitken about this painting, “At the heart of the painting, Siva and His music tease mortals with a seemingly impossible collaboration between material desire and its transcendence that wells up again and again in India’s raga and ragini paintings.”

Yet another gallery, “Yoga in the Transnational Imagination (1850–1940),” provides the viewer quite a different perception of the yogi: With the coming of the British, yogis were vilified as exotic beings in the colonial photography and company paintings. There are stereotypical images of sadhus and magic, of Hindu fakirs lying on a bed of nails. Constantly replaying in the gallery is Thomas Edison’s *Hindoo Fakir*, the first movie ever made of an Indian subject. This derogatory and Westernized image of yoga was perpetuated by mass photographs and postcards. At the same time, however, English artists such as Thomas Rowlandson (above left) skewered missionary efforts with their cartoons.

The final gallery revolves around the yoga renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th century with yoga being regarded as a non-sectarian practice for health and spiritual well-being. Here you find the books and images of Swami Vivekananda who brought Hinduism and a philosophically focused

yoga to America. Visitors can also catch the earliest film of Krishnamacharya and his student B.K.S. Iyengar showing yoga postures, many of which are now used in yoga classes.

### Evaluation

Going into the exhibition, I had wondered whether Hinduism would get the short end of the stick and not be recognized as the wellspring of yoga. It was an issue brought to the attention of the organizers in advance by the Hindu American Foundation as part of their “Take Back Yoga” campaign, and some suggestions seem to have been incorporated.

While the galleries do speak of yoga as an Indian phenomenon rather than solely a Hindu one, the works themselves are a powerful case of show over tell. From the very first gallery you have Hindu Gods and Goddesses, mahayogis and yoginis as well as great Hindu texts powerfully and visually showing yoga’s origins. Further, Hinduism is complex, with many varied monikers—Saivism, Vaishnava, Vedic, and Tantric—attached to it; and so the single word *Hindu* is not always used.

What becomes apparent as one browses the galleries is the truth that culture and religion are deeply entwined and exchanged in India. Not only Hindu but also Jain, Buddhist and Sufi artworks highlight the prevalence of yoga in their traditions. There are sacred texts in tongues ranging from Sanskrit to Marathi to Persian, all a part of the 5,000-year-old juggernaut of Indian culture.

According to Diamond, this exhibition is only the beginning: four courses in universities across the US will be offering undergraduate and graduate courses in the visual culture of yoga: “It’s a new field, and we happily anticipate many new discoveries about yoga’s rich meanings and histories,” she says.

Indeed, the show is a veritable feast of yoga

**India and yoga through many eyes:** (left to right) 1604 Persian art of a yogi in kandasana; “Group of Yogis, Chennai, circa 1880; “Five Sages in Barren Icy Heights,” 1815, from the Kedara Kalpa, an account of pilgrimage to Mount Kailash

knowledge on many levels and a gathering of masterpieces which will probably not be seen together again after this show. I saw many viewers examining the small paintings with magnifying glasses provided by the museum, for there are exquisite micro-details hidden in these works of art. The exhibit offers an abundance of riches, but in the end each person will take away only what they need or can comprehend.

“One of India’s greatest philosophers, Abhinavagupta, wrote in the 10th century that sensitive viewers—those who can literally taste the essence (*rasa*) of art—experience an aesthetic pleasure akin to the bliss of expanded consciousness,” writes Diamond. “Thus transcending the limitations of ego-bound perception, the sensitive viewer has a foretaste of enlightened detachment, which takes the form of ‘melting, expansion and radiance.’”

The strength of this first-ever exhibition of the visual aspects of yoga is that if you keep very still and immerse yourself in the magic world of these masterpieces, you lose all sense of time, place and self. You feel the melting, expansion and radiance, and carry this affirming glow with you as you return to the train station of the mundane world. 🍵

LAVINA MELWANI is a New York-based journalist who writes for several international publications (blog: [www.lassiwithlavina.com](http://www.lassiwithlavina.com), Twitter: [@lassiwithlavina](https://twitter.com/lassiwithlavina), Google+: [plus.google.com/+lavinamelwani/posts](https://plus.google.com/+lavinamelwani/posts)).



# Guru's Grace Empowers Philosophical Treatise

A modern monk completes the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam*, a scriptural commentary in a formal Sanskrit style not exercised for centuries

BY SADHU BHADRESHDAS

**M**INE IS A STORY ABOUT WHAT MAMMOTH WORK CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE guru's grace. The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* is a commentary on the Prasthantrayi—the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*—formulated according to the ancient Sanskrit commentarial tradition and guided by the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Through my journey in writing the *bhashyas*, I have come to realize that seemingly impossible tasks, in any field, can be accomplished when the guru's grace blesses human effort.

I was initiated as a swami in 1981 at the age of 14, having just completed the ninth grade. Upon entering the seminary for swamis in Sarangpur, a remote village in Gujarat, I was immersed in its focused and devotional atmosphere. Because of my young age, I was very lighthearted and had little sense of responsibility, yet from the beginning I felt indebted to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, my guru, for accepting me and shaping me during every phase of life.

I passed my time listening to bhajans, playing tabla, and most of all, swimming in the step-well that supplied the ashram's water. The senior swamis who taught us would have to force me to attend class! My sharp memory helped me get good marks, but the seniors were concerned about my irregular study habits. They even commented about it to Guruhari on a few occasions. However, Guruhari flashed an indulgent smile at me and said, "Even the mischievous can accomplish great things." Bolstered by his tender support, I felt a greater sense of duty and began to study more responsibly.

Guruhari Pramukh Swami Maharaj had pandits come to Sarangpur to teach me and other swamis the traditional philosophical systems of Nyaya and Vyakaran (logic and grammar). He advised us, "Never study only to take exams. I want you to study each scripture fully. Knowing the difficulty you have had in finding capable teachers, you should study so thoroughly that you can teach the material to future swamis." At that time we only took internal exams, which were designed to be even harder than university exams. We studied each line of each scripture. I spent my time so immersed in different philosophies that for ten years I had no idea what was happening in the outside world.

We could not find teachers in Gujarat for all of the topics Guruhari wanted us to study, so he arranged for us to study in Mumbai. After completing our education there, he instructed us to learn the scriptures methodically using ancient traditions. There were only a few

pandits in India who could teach in this traditional manner. Since they were all too aged to come to us in Gujarat, Guruhari arranged for us to stay in Bangalore and study from them there.

Having spent over 25 years in rigorous study of Sanskrit and the *shad darshans* (the six schools of Vedic philosophy), I was able to excel in university exams for postgraduate degrees from Sampurnanand Sanskrit University in Varanasi and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Mumbai. Through my studies I had compiled over 8,000 pages of notes and stood at the top of my class. Each time my results would arrive, Guruhari, despite his rigorous travels, would write a letter of encouragement. He would inspire me to study harder and do even better the next time.

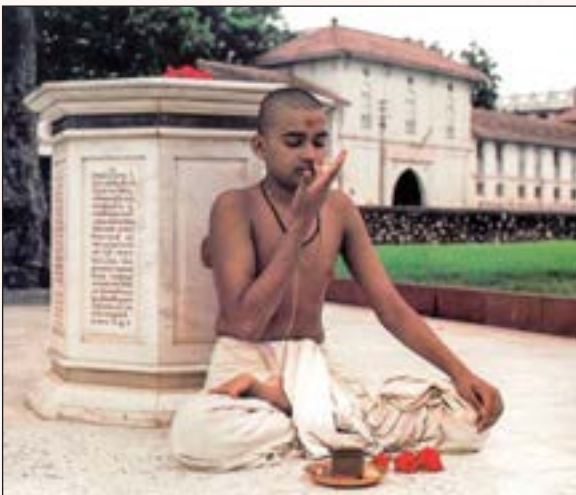
The seeds for writing the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* were planted in 2005 on the day I finished my PhD in Sanskrit. I brought the certificate to Pramukh Swami Maharaj two days before the Vasant Panchami festival, which marks the beginning of spring. As I presented my dissertation to Guruhari in his room, other swamis requested that he give me a sanctified flower to commemorate the occasion. He replied, "I want to honor him in the main assembly of the festival." It was that afternoon that he instructed me to write *bhashyas*, commentaries, on the Prasthantrayi.

## The Bhashya Tradition

In the ancient tradition of Indian philosophy, many different beliefs and principles were born out of deep study and contemplation by great rishis and acharyas. They contemplated upon the ancient sacred texts of the Prasthantrayi, and the commentaries they wrote established their schools of Vedantic thought. The principal acharyas who wrote *bhashyas* were Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya and Vallabhacharya. Centuries later, these

commentaries are still highly valued and remain the basis for philosophical debates and novel elaborations.

Not all commentaries are called *bhashyas*. To earn this designation, the author must have a thorough knowledge of the *shad darshans* and possess intellectual maturity, clarity of principles and an expertise in the Sanskrit language. Each acharya reveals his philosophy through his interpretations of the original texts. Every word of each mantra, shloka or sutra must be interpreted and commented upon in accordance with his philosophy. Sometimes the words are interpreted to have novel meanings, and these must withstand the academic scrutiny of other scholars.



**Monk's life:** The author as a young sadhak in 1982

**Congratulations:** Sadhu Bhadreshdas receives blessings from his guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, in Amdavad upon completing the first draft of the commentary on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. (below) The author at work on the original, handwritten manuscript. Dr. S.P. Sabharathnam of Chennai said of the *bhashya*, "A wonderful work. The Sanskrit is in the medieval style as used by Shankara and free from grammatical error."

A *bhashya* includes references from other shastras to support the acharya's philosophy. In addition, it raises questions and satisfies arguments from other Vedantic philosophies by providing reasonable references and logical answers to prove one's own philosophical principle. In brief, a *bhashya* intends to reveal a novel philosophical perspective derived from the three main shastras in a logical, clear and consistent manner. Any meaning given for any word in any one *Upanishad* must be consistent for all ten *Upanishads*. It must also represent the same meaning in the *Brahmasutras* and the *Gita*. The ten principal *Upanishads* have thousands of mantras, the *Brahmasutras* are written in a concise form and also require thorough knowledge of the philosophical school known as Purva Mimansa; and the *Gita* has 700 shlokas. Therefore, as one can imagine, the process of writing a *bhashya* is incredibly complex.

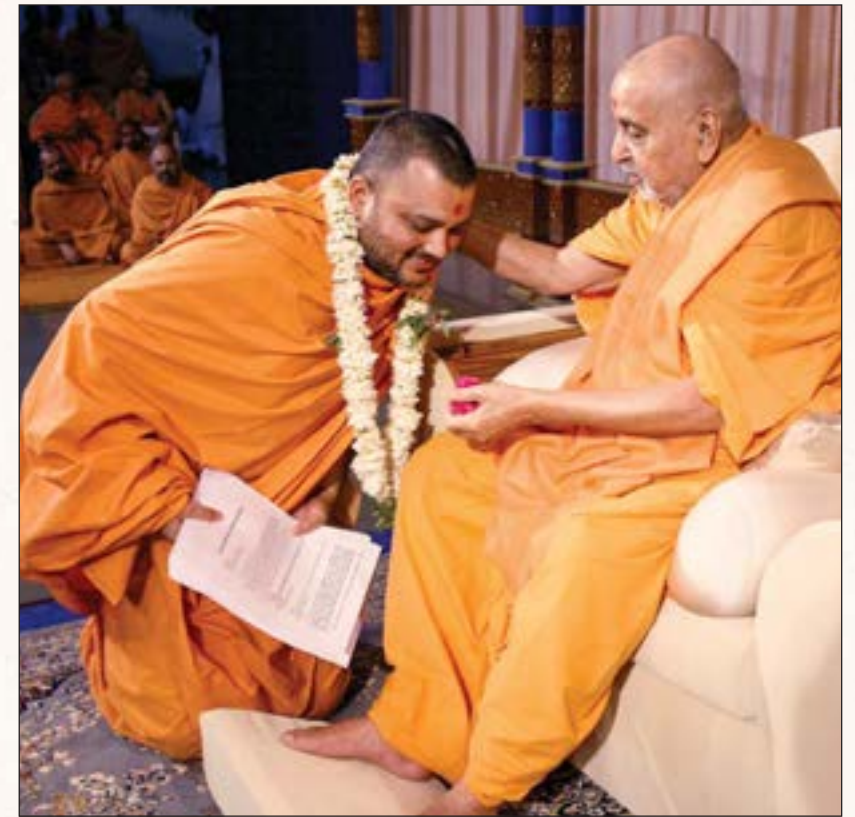
## This Bhashya's Journey

I thought about why Guruhari would want me to undertake this task and why writing the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* would be unique. Any new interpretation of the Prasthantrayi must not merely be novel; it must also be textually valid and profoundly meaningful. The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* would need to satisfy these criteria based on the teachings of the progenitor of our sampradaya, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who referred to a variety of mantras from the *Upanishads* and shlokas from the *Bhagavad Gita* in his discourses, often adding to them his own philosophical explanations.

Knowing this, I was struck dumb when Guruhari commanded me to write the *bhashyas*; I felt wholly unprepared for the task. Senior swamis encouraged me to view this mammoth task as a golden opportunity to please the guru. They even prayed for me! However, I was lost. I could not sleep. "I have studied *bhashyas*," I thought, "but now I am to create one?! What if I made a mistake? Even a small mistake in a *bhashya* would be a disservice to Hindu Dharma." In my daily puja I prayed that Guruhari would request that someone else write them.

A few days after Guruhari gave me the instruction, we took part in the Vasant Panchami celebrations, which also marked the birth anniversary of Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951), Pramukh Swami Maharaj's guru. Guruhari garlanded me before the large assembly and insisted, "Promise me that you will write the *bhashyas*." Though I agreed with great hesitation, the promise brought tears to his eyes. When I asked him to sanctify a mala I had with me, he told me to put it around his neck. He turned the beads of that mala for over a month and returned it to me after the Pushpadotsav (Holi) festival. Whenever I worked on the *bhashyas*, I would keep that sanctified mala around my neck to invoke his divine presence.

I began my work in a small, secluded room in the basement of the



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ashram in Sarangpur. My brother swamis built a rotating bookshelf with five large shelves to hold a collection of over 450 books, some of which were centuries old, making it easier for me to cross-reference ideas.

From the day I started, I would spend nearly 20 hours a day working and praying. Senior swamis advised me that I should punctuate each hour of research with five minutes of intense prayer and remembrance of Guruhari. The only time I would break would be to teach a class to other swamis, engage in our daily devotional rituals, eat and sleep.

After putting a thought on paper, I would examine it from several different perspectives and pose a series of questions: Are my interpretations valid? Has it been formulated correctly linguistically? Is the idea consistent with the principles of Bhagwan Swaminarayan?





Does the idea hold according to what Guruhari has taught me? Is that thought consistent with my previous thoughts? And so on. If I was not satisfied, I would rewrite the idea. If I thought I had a good idea, I would even share it with senior swamis, and they would often question my ideas, ultimately strengthening the work. This journey was to continue for almost three years.

Guruhari had advised me, “Make sure you take inspiration from the principles given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Make sure your arguments are clear and straightforward and thus universally acceptable. You will have to engage with the ideas of other acharyas, but you should do so respectfully. Our purpose is not to efface the work of others, but to expound our own. They are right in their own way, but that does not mean we are wrong. Stay focused, and whatever you write will be well received.”

These words constantly played in my mind. When I experienced bouts of confusion and sleepless nights, I would pray to Guruhari’s murti in my puja. I would ask for his inspiration, and it always came.



**Persistence:** (left to right) The flooded entrance to the author’s basement workplace in Sarangpur in February 2007; damaged books and notes spread out to dry; the completed five volumes of the Swaminarayan Bhashyam, which are available at major BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs in Gujarat, India

The most profound ideas in the bhashya were not written by me; I cannot take credit for them. They were inspired by my guru.

Once, I worked until 2:45am, then went to bathe and sat for my puja. I spoke to my guru in my puja, and he inspired me with a few thoughts. Choosing to write those thoughts down before retiring to bed, I went back into my basement room and began writing. One thought led to another, and I finished writing at 3:45pm—over 12 hours of flowing inspiration! I also kept a diary and pen near my bedroll in case I was inspired at night, and there were countless such incidents.

# Comparing Interpretations

A KEY VERSE IN THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD (2.1.2) READS “Aksharāt parataḥ paraḥ,” translated as, “(Parabrahman) is greater than even Akshara, who is greater than all.” Below

the interpretation of the meaning of the word *Akshara* in the context of this verse as given in the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* is presented alongside those of three of the traditional commentaries.

	Shankar	Ramanuja	Madhva	Swaminarayan
Sanskrit	अव्याकृताद्	भूतसूक्ष्मम् अचेतनम्	प्रकृतिर्जडरूपिका	पूर्व परविद्याधिगम्यतयोक्तादक्षराख्यदिव्यतत्त्वाद्
Transliteration	Avyākṛtād	Bhūtasūkṣmam acetanam	Prakṛtirjaḍarūpikā	Pūrvam paravidyādhigamyatayoktādaḥśarākhyadivyatattvād
Translation	“Undivided substance”  (distinct from the Akshara mentioned in previous mantras)	“Insentient subtle elements”  (distinct from the Akshara mentioned in previous mantras)	“Inanimate source material”  (distinct from the Akshara mentioned in previous mantras)	“Aksharbrahman, a divine, conscious being”  (the same Akshara as mentioned in previous mantras)

In this *Upanishad*, the three medieval scholars interpret the word *Akshara* as “Parabrahman” in mantras previous to this one. But in this mantra, they have been forced to change their definition in order to maintain their philosophical perspective, as this very mantra states that Akshara is distinct from Parabrahman. This verse and the consistency in definition of the word in ques-

tion turns out to be pivotal in establishing the point of view from which this new commentary looks at the scriptures. A unique concept lies at the very center of the Swaminarayan philosophy: that Aksharbrahman is a sentient, eternal, divine entity, ontologically distinct from the Supreme God, Parabrahman, and that Parabrahman resides on Earth through Aksharbrahman, the living guru.



## Trial and Tribulation

Bhashyas have an important place in any sampradaya, and a commentary on the whole Prasthantrayi in a traditional manner had not been undertaken by anyone in the past several centuries. At times I felt apprehensive that I would fail in my colossal task.

In 2006 I pleaded to my guru, “Swamishri! You have complete realization of Bhagwan. You are the Satpurush. You have spiritual experience. You understand the essence of all the scriptures. You are the only one with the right and the insight to write bhashyas. I am afraid. I have no experience. What if I fail?” He replied, “You feel that you are writing, but you are wrong. You will not write the bhashyas; our gurus, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, will write through you.” We are not the doers in anything; we are merely instruments through which the guru works. It was this realization that allowed me to remain strong despite the many obstacles I experienced.

In 2007 Sarangpur was struck by a flash flood. Within minutes my basement room was completely submerged. All my books and notes were ruined. For years I had compiled over 2500 pages of notes on eleven bhashyas by various acharyas. These notes on their arguments and definitions of important philosophical terms would form the framework of the commentary I was to write. Moreover, I had even handwritten some chapters of the *Brahmasutra Bhashyam*. All of this was washed away in the flood, and I was in a state of absolute shock at this unforeseen calamity.

At the time, Guruhari Pramukh Swami Maharaj had gone to America for the inauguration of our mandirs in Atlanta and Toronto. When he was informed of the flood, he called to bless me. He laughed and said, “Everything that you weren’t supposed to write has been washed away. Now, when you write, Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our gurus will write everything through you.” That, in fact, is exactly what happened.

Guruhari had told me to finish all the bhashyas before the Centenary Celebration of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in December, 2007, which was only six months away. Even without the setback, it was going to be difficult to meet the deadline—and now all my notes and books were covered in mud. Over the next ten days we put them into large pots, washed each page and set them out to dry; however, almost nothing could be salvaged. Now, with no notes or books, but only the blessings of Guruhari before my eyes, I started writing again.

Just as Guruhari had predicted, I experienced his divine presence as I wrote for 18–20 hours a day. By his grace, I was able to complete all the bhashyas on time. The bhashya on all 700 shlokas of the *Gita* took only one and a half months!

Throughout the whole writing process, Guruhari and other senior swamis checked each argument and scriptural reference, providing priceless guidance and support. I still vividly remember when my guru personally tested the grammar and arguments of everything I wrote from the *Gita*’s eighth and fifteenth chapters.

My journey culminated on December 17, 2007, the day of our Centenary Celebrations in Amdavad. I presented the bhashyas to Guruhari during his morning puja. He responded in a very loving and satisfied tone, “Our gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj are pleased, and they have blessed you. You have done a tremendous service for Hindu Dharma.” I asked, “Swami, are you pleased?” Guruhari replied, “I am extremely pleased.” The smile on his face and his sincere blessings made my long and arduous journey and all of the efforts I had made completely worthwhile. I felt at peace.

Fast forward six years to just a few days before I began writing this article, when a fellow swami related something that left me awe-struck. On March 20, 1989, in Sarangpur, years before I had begun my journey, he had written of the following incident in his diary. On that day, after Guruhari had dinner, several swamis were reciting the philosophical topics they had learned in their Sanskrit studies. A senior swami told Guruhari in a joking tone, “Instead of just studying, someone should write bhashyas.” Guruhari pointed to me and declared, “He will write them.”

I was only 22 at the time and a complete novice to scriptural scholarship! Never in my wildest dreams had I thought that what Guruhari said was his vision. But therein lies the lesson of my story: All of us have capacities that we have never utilized, and may never utilize. If we find a genuine guru, put faith in his words and live according to his guidance, we can accomplish much more than our innate capacities would allow.

These bhashyas are important for scholars as well as for society at large. They will help generations of people in two ways: First, they will provide valid answers to life’s deepest challenges. It is becoming clear that spirituality will provide solutions to intractable social issues in an increasingly materialistic society. The scriptures explain that spirituality is *brahmavidya* (knowing God). The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* provides clear and unique understandings of brahmavidya, and one who understands and imbibes brahmavidya in his or her life will find lasting solutions to life’s most challenging problems. Second, in the history of Indian and Western philosophy the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* sheds new light, which will inspire scholars in India and abroad to conduct further research to find new perspectives on and relevance in these central, ancient scriptures.



# For Sustainability, Look to India

Wealthy nations can learn from her frugal, vegetarian-friendly lifestyle

BY PANKAJ JAIN

WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED AT NEW YORK'S JFK airport in 1996, I was immediately struck by the hundreds of cars plying the airport's many encircling highways. I was born in the small town of Pali in Rajasthan and had lived most of my life in India. I had prepared myself for a cultural shock, and the first one was environmental. I asked my friend Ajay who had come to pick me up, how so many cars could be sustained through the world's current fuel crisis. Having arrived in the US just months before me, Ajay proudly declared, "Oh, this is America! They can run their cars on water if they have to, don't worry!"

Such was the faith of many in America, whose daily lives rely on modern science and technological aids such as cars or cell phones. With impending environmental issues looming large over humankind, I wonder if this faith is weakening now, just 18 years after my first American encounter. Last month, after my latest visit to New York, I posted this on my Facebook: "First thought whenever I reach New York City: 'How will all this sustain itself?' First thought whenever I reach India: 'How has all this sustained itself?'"

Immediately, my comment was challenged, and what ensued was my defense of India and its long-standing sustainability, versus the United States', which towers at the other extreme. I started by comparing India's meat consumption to the US, UK, China, Brazil and others ([bit.ly/faostat3](http://bit.ly/faostat3)). India remains the foremost vegetarian country in the world. Even after the globalization of modern Western ways, Indians have successfully preserved the vegetarian habits that were laid down by their dharmic traditions several millennia ago. The typical Indian diet still consists mainly of rice, wheat, beans and vegetables. Even most nonvegetarians depend on vegetarian food as the chief components of their diet, consuming egg, meat and fish only occasionally.

In a ground-breaking 2006 report, the United Nations said that raising animals for food generates more greenhouse gases than all the cars and trucks in the world combined. Senior UN Food and Agriculture Organization official Henning Steinfeld reported that the meat industry is "one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems." But even after Western media reported this connection of meat eating with global warming, many of the issue's leading politicians failed to take any action to change the habits of meat consumption in Western society.

Such clear evidence has seemingly been ignored by Western society in general. For example, in April, 2007, a leading *New York Times* columnist rejected any changes needed in the Western lifestyle, while demanding "greener" initiatives from the US government.

This Western dichotomy—expecting environmental initiatives from government and businesses while failing to acknowledge a need for change in our personal lifestyles—was the concluding subject of Ramachandra Guha's book, *How Much Should a Person*



*Consume?* Guha observes that Western society comprises only 20 percent of the world's population but consumes about 80 percent of global production. The other 80 percent of humanity gets the remaining 20 percent.

Guha agrees with conservationist Ashish Kothari and criticizes the hypocrisy of the developed world. He explains that it is the allegedly civilized who have decimated forests and the wildlife which had previously sustained both tiger and tribal. With rifles and a quest for trophies, they have hunted wild species to extinction; now they disguise themselves as conservationists and complain that tribal groups are getting in the way. The real population problem is in America, where the birth of one child

has the same impact on the global environment as the birth of about 70 Indonesian children.

Due to the dharmic traditions inspired by history's gurus and sages, Indian society successfully moved away from the animal sacrifices and killings prevalent in its ancient past, adopting lifestyles based largely on vegetarianism. But most scholars ignore vegetarianism, though it is one of the most important dharmic lessons inspired by Indic tradition and one that could positively impact an array of threatening global issues.

In the 1990s India began to embrace the Western capitalist economic model, and today India is fast transcending its once slow rate of economic growth. Until this Western market invasion, the so-called "Hindu rate of growth" might have been both the result and the reason for limited Indian spending for consumer goods. A 2001 article by Professor Ann Gold of Syracuse University, NY, shows that consumption is severely constrained and morally limited by the traditional Hindu ideals of self-restraint such as fasting, detachment from material goods, eating only what is appropriate, etc.

Four consecutive Greendex Sustainability Surveys, conducted by National Geographic magazine in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2012 ([bit.ly/natgeoenv](http://bit.ly/natgeoenv)), show India continuing to rank first in sustainability, with the US hovering near the bottom. The survey compares major parameters of a country's housing, transportation and food. In all these areas, Indian habits were the most sustainable. Many Indian houses continue to avoid or lack air-conditioning, heating and 24/7 hot water, and the dwelling sizes are much smaller. India's average use of personal cars continues to be less than in other major countries, and Indians still prefer public transport for their daily commutes to work or school. Indian consumption of locally produced food remains high, while consumption of bottled water, meat and seafood continues to be less than in other countries.

Westerners who are sincerely interested in sustainable living would do well to follow India's ageless example.

PANKAJ JAIN, PH.D, is Assistant Professor of Hinduism, Jainism and Ecology at the University of North Texas

# Canada's Hindu Crisis

Identifying the key challenges facing Sri Lankan Tamil youth in the Great White North

BY VIGNESH MARKANDU

I GREW UP IN LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA, JUST WEST OF Toronto. As the only Hindu in my elementary school, I was often asked to explain Hinduism and Hindu culture to other students. As I grew older, I did class presentations. This continued in secondary school. People often inquired about my religion, as I would openly wear sacred ash and a pottu at the third eye on my forehead. By the end of my high school life, most of my peers were aware that I was Hindu. Most of them also understood a few things about Hinduism, such as the tenets of karma, nonviolence and reincarnation. But I never really associated with other Hindu Canadian Tamil youth until 2011, when I entered the University of Ottawa and began participating in the Tamil Students' Union. Interacting with Tamil Hindu students over the past year, I have observed we are losing our Hindu tradition. I believe this crisis in the transmission of our culture has three main causes.

First, there is an appalling lack of education about even the simple basics of philosophy and spirituality. Many students do not practice Hinduism, because they believe God is some abstract and inconceivable construct. Others believe religion is incompatible with rational, scientific thought. Some say visiting the temple is economically irrational—that it provides net loss of money and no material gain. Some even parrot atheistic arguments against the dogmas of Abrahamic faiths, such as the lack of proof of heaven—attempting to apply these to Hinduism. But they simply do not apply! Hinduism has no eternal heaven or hell, for instance; both states are experienced in life. Nor do we believe in the devil. As the great Saivite saint of Sri Lanka, Sage Chellappaswami, said, "There is no intrinsic evil." On the contrary, Hindus believe in the intrinsic Godliness of all that exists—a doctrine diametrically opposed to the teachings of Abrahamic faiths. But the stark differences between Hinduism and Abrahamic faiths are never made clear, so our youth remain ignorant and unaware.

A second serious issue impacting Tamil youth—not only here in Canada, but worldwide—is Tamil fanaticism. Certain groups are propagating the idea that Hinduism is an Aryan religion keeping Dravidian people in shackles. Canada is home to the largest number of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka's civil war. Already emotionally battered, they hear claims that Hinduism itself oppresses Tamils. Heated claims such as this often blind people to the facts. The Aryan invasion theory has been debunked. Hinduism is not an "outside religion;" it is the native religion of South Asia. But political parties such as the DMK and other Marxist parties in India have used the idea of Dravidian exceptionalism to divide Tamil Nadu from the rest of India for political gain. Political opportunism of this sort has infected Tamils in Sri Lanka, who regard the Sinhalese as Aryans, and Tamils in Canada, who are increasingly seeing Hinduism as Aryan. They forget that Hinduism needs both Sanskrit and Tamil to survive. Tamil and Hindu are synonymous. The Tamil identity shares a strong connection with Hinduism, especially Saiva Siddhanta. *The Guru*



evangelism. In ancient days Hinduism reinvented itself and evolved in countless ways to deal with the rise of Jainism and Buddhism. Our great saints were also proactive missionaries. At times when Hinduism seemed weak, Adi Shankara unified the Smarta tradition and Tirumular reinvigorated Saiva Siddhanta. In recent times in Sri Lanka, Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar countered the English missionary schools with a Hindu English-medium school. The time has come once again for us to respond to the threats of ignorance, fanaticism and materialism. Hindu youth must be taught the importance of Hindu dharma. Hindu leaders must respond to the blatant lies and misrepresentations of our religion.

Finally, Tamils must unite to keep political propaganda away from religion. The youth must be taught that Hinduism is an ancient yet modern religion, truly timeless—applicable through the generations and various walks of life. Hinduism carries the wisdom of the past yet embodies modernity, containing the answers for past, present and future and for all aspects of human experience, offering guidance to each person on his or her uniquely circuitous journey to our common destiny. We must clearly and unequivocally proclaim the great truths of Hinduism for all to hear. My grandfather has often told me, "You can take the cow to the water, but you cannot make the cow drink the water." Our duty is to take the youth to the holy lake called Hinduism and make sure the water is pure and crystal clear. Even someone who is not thirsty will drink if it is appealing and self-appreciating.

Every being is on a spiritual journey. My family's trip to Kauai Aadhennam in 2003 changed the course of our lives; we became spiritually awake. Going through high school and university as a practicing Hindu allowed me to stay focused. My family is transparent; we've discussed everything from women to partying. I offer no other advice but to seek Divinity as a family and strive to experience it. Our religion and tradition can be preserved in a modern world.

VIGNESH MARKANDU, 20, is President of the Tamil Students' Union at the University of Ottawa. [vigneshmarkandu@gmail.com](mailto:vigneshmarkandu@gmail.com)

*Chronicles* quotes the Rishi from the Himalayas, when he sent his sishya to preach in Sri Lanka: "The people [in Sri Lanka] are pure; they cherish their traditions; they live the Saivite path; but they do not know the spirit of Siva." These days, sadly, it seems the Tamils neither know the spirit of Siva nor live the Saivite path.

The third challenge is the materialistic consumerism that is engulfing Tamil Hindus—not only the youth but entire families. Eastern as well as Western Hindus are increasingly driven by greed and the pursuit of material gain. Students and parents alike are motivated primarily by the desire for material objects. Visiting the temple and praying are considered irrelevant to these goals and are therefore neglected. This leads only to discontent. Wealth, artha, is a legitimate and worthy human goal, when it is part of a balanced life. Today, however, many families are so consumed by their pursuit of wealth that they live a joyless, spiritually impoverished, sometimes even adharmic life with no thought of eventually attaining moksha.

But Hinduism has withstood the test of time. It has endured Muslim invasion, European colonialism and Christian





## YOUTH

# The Critical Search for Identity

## Two essays on what it means to be a Hindu and an American

The Hindu American Foundation conducted its annual essay contest in which young writers were asked how the following quote by Swami Vivekananda inspired them to be Hindu American advocates: "The intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion, and the most diabolical hatred that humanity has known has also come from religion. Nothing makes us so cruel as religion, and nothing makes us so tender as religion." To see other winning essays visit their website at [bit.ly/hafessays](http://bit.ly/hafessays)

### I Am Proud to Be a Hindu

BY ANTARA DATTA GUPTA

MATA, PITA, GURU AND DEVAM ARE THE FOUR WORDS THAT my guruji raised me with. Always respecting my mother, father, teacher and God is a belief that has been inculcated in me from a young age. From going to *Balavihar* classes on Sunday to *shloka* classes on Wednesday, Hinduism has been with me every step of the way. My guruji would always end the class with, "Be proud of who you are; be proud to be a Hindu." Growing up in a strong Christian city where there are churches every half mile, I am often faced with difficult situations that only my faith has helped to overcome. From my classmates demeaning my fourth grade *Kathak* dance at our school's talent show to the look of disgust when I tell them that I do not eat beef—a staple food eaten by most Texans—I have become stronger as a Hindu throughout each and every obstacle.

I have seen throughout my lifetime how religion has changed people, broken friendships and ultimately made others feel insecure of their lifestyle. My childhood friends whom I used to see at *shloka* class now call themselves atheists in an attempt to fit in at our high school. When I inquired about the reason for such a drastic conversion, they said they could not take the isolation anymore. At that moment, I realized I have been blessed with a rare and accepting group of friends who have never imposed their faith on me. They have come to the temple with me for celebrations such as Holi and Diwali and constantly want to know more about Saraswati, Ganesha and the other Gods that they see at my house. Because of my friends, for these past few years I have been oblivious to the outside world where many people are not so accepting of other religions.

On December 14, 2012, we organized an Indian day at school.

Hindi music played through the intercom, people of different races wore kurtis and churidars borrowed from their Indian friends, and after school we had samosas and chaat for those who participated. This was a proud day for many of us Hindus, because we were able to show our culture to others in our school.

Religion should not be something that separates people but rather something that inspires others, different and alike, to come together and learn more about each other. In the twelve grade levels of school there are two grades, sixth and tenth, where we learn about the main world religions. I noticed that both times we spent a week on Christianity, four days on Islam, three days on Judaism and Buddhism, and only one day on Hinduism. On that one day of Hinduism, we watched a 50-minute video that focused only on the caste system. While watching that video, I realized that this is where people base their views of Hinduism, in an obsolete caste system that is denounced by most Hindus. With such inadequate and biased knowledge, when my classmates even confuse Hinduism and Islam, I cannot blame them.

After watching the video again in tenth grade, I talked to my teacher about spending another day learning about the real aspects of Hinduism that are still in practice today. To my surprise, she assigned a project to all of the students the following day which focused on India's many ancient discoveries. I was able to pick and present both the inner and outer discoveries made by Hindus. I was able to tell my classmates how the concepts of karma and dharma are essential to Hinduism as well as the ideas behind reincarnation and moksha.

Hinduism impacts the everyday choices we make in life through verses in the *Vedas*. Sayings like those found in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *Yajur Veda*, such as "Satyam vada," meaning "speak the truth," and "Athithi devo bhava," meaning "let your guests receive from you hospitality like a God," are beliefs that Hindus follow daily.

After reading Swami Vivekananda's quote, I have been inspired to initiate more Indian days and other events to spread the knowledge about true Hinduism. By dancing at events for the past few years such as the Brazos

Valley World Fest and CRY India (Child Rights and You), I have been able to share with the community my culture and religion. Now as I go into my junior year at school, I wake up every morning, get dressed, and just before I leave my house I put vibhuti on my forehead and go to school. Initially people would tell me I had "white



stuff" on my forehead, but after explaining to them that I am fully aware of it and that it is part of my religion, the questions eventually stopped.

As I grow up, my friends will change, my schools will change and my future may change; however, my religion will never change. I will always be able to say, "I am proud to be a Hindu."

ANTARA DATTAGUPTA, 17, is a junior at A&M Consolidated High School in College Station, Texas. Raised under the teachings of her Guruji, Anu Shamugam, she is a proud supporter of HAF

### Will We Forget the Hindu American Voice?

BY SADHNA GUPTA

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE Swami Vivekananda's words in a very personal way. I spent a portion of my summer traveling to communities across the East Coast, interviewing recently settled Bhutanese refugees from Nepal. I wished to better understand the role of religion in the resettlement of Hindu refugees. At the time, I also began to reexamine my own views of religious tolerance and pluralism. For the first time, I understood the importance of being a Hindu American advocate.

I went to the homes of dozens of Bhutanese families, asking them to open up to me about their life experiences. These families were forced to flee their birth country of Bhutan due to religious and ethnic persecution in the early 1990s. They lived in Nepal's refugee camps, many for more than 20 years, before the United States government (and other countries) granted them citizenship and a chance for a new life. They endured this suffering largely to preserve their religious freedom and maintain pride in their identity. Yet now, after moving to America, some have given up their Hindu practices or even converted to other religions. This was shocking to me. I needed to understand the cause of this conversion.

A 27-year-old I spoke with in Massachusetts shed some light on this issue. He explained, "Some of the churches, but not all, provide old furniture and clothing for the new arrivals, and it is helpful. People go to the church just to get the furniture and whatever they need, but they do not think about conversion. But, after some time, the people at the church indirectly convert the Bhutanese people."

This is exactly the tension that Swami Vivekananda describes—the power of religion to simultaneously be a remarkably helpful and equally destructive force. In this instance, the church community is doing good by providing necessities to the Bhutanese and helping them to acclimate to their new environment. At the same time, however, their actions could also be seen as coercive and unethical because the group may have ulterior motives for providing help.

My immediate reaction was to feel angry towards these outside groups for targeting vulnerable Hindus. Soon, however, I realized I

needed to take a closer look at my own actions and those of our community. Was there more we could have done to prevent it?

The underlying beauty and purity of Hinduism comes from teachings such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, "We are all one family," and *Ekam sat vipraha bahudha vadanti*, "Truth is one, the wise call it by many names." We are incredibly lucky to be part of a faith that is so fundamentally accepting and progressive. Yet, in practice, religious tolerance and pluralism can only thrive when complemented by strong faith and advocacy. What do I mean by that? It is certainly against our Hindu principles to coerce others and provide assistance conditional on religious affiliation; and this is honestly one of the reasons I am most proud to be a Hindu. But it is also against our faith to be passive and not advocate or intervene when it is required. The general absence of our community in the resettlement of Hindu Bhutanese refugees in America is an illustration of this reality.

After learning of the hardships facing Hindu Bhutanese in my local community, I was inspired to make a difference, but I was not sure how to begin. I took small steps on my own. I educated students and faculty at my university about the issue, and I volunteered with a group of Bhutanese youth to teach SAT classes, create a library of study materials and organize college tours in Boston. Yet in the large scheme of things, I did not address the root cause of the problem.

When you see injustice against members of the Hindu community, whom do you turn to for help? What do you do to stop it from happening? These were the questions I grappled with, and I quickly

realized that most Hindu Americans, including myself, do not know how to answer these questions. As a community, we often fail to collectively organize and advocate for our beliefs.

By forming a stronger coalition of Hindu American advocates and by supporting groups like the Hindu American Foundation, we will have the power to do so much more. We could lobby local lawmakers to provide stricter oversight over conversion in government-funded resettlement agencies. We could pressure local school boards to teach Hinduism more comprehensively, rather than just focusing on cows and the caste system. And looking back, we could have shown much more solidarity with the victims of the 2012 Sikh Gurudwara shooting in Wisconsin.

Advocacy is the main avenue through which we can play a bigger hand in shaping the broader society we live in. Throughout the United

States, there are countless religious groups that spend significant time and money to ensure that their opinions and values are heard. While we can never forget to be respectful of all those around us, we must also learn to speak up and ensure that our Hindu American voice is not forgotten. We cannot allow our open-mindedness and tolerance to be confused for ambivalence or a lack of steadfast faith in our Hindu principles.

SADHNA GUPTA, 22, is a business consultant at Corporate Executive Board in Washington DC. Having graduated from Duke University in May, 2013, with degrees in public policy, global health and economics, she plans to become a community organizer and development practitioner.







TELEVISION

## Chinmaya Mission Creates a Hit TV Series

The 54-part *Upanishad Ganga* offers a systematic presentation of key Hindu and Vedantic teachings in an innovative retelling of ancient stories

**W**HEN SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA decided to reach the masses through a TV show, he turned to director Chandraprakash Dwivedi, who wrote, directed and starred in *Chanakya*, the popular 1990s series set in ancient India. He then assigned a team of erudite Chinmaya Mission acharyas—Swamini Vimalananda, Swami Advayananda and Brahmachari Samvid Chaitanya—to guide the project.

Produced at a cost of US\$1.6 million, the resulting 54 episodes of *Upanishad Ganga* ([upanishadganga.com](http://upanishadganga.com)) cover the gamut of Hindu philosophy. Episodes explore the *Vedas*, the four goals of life, the four ashramas, 16 rites of passage, caste, reincarnation, the guru, the Self, maya, types of spiritual practices and the nature of ultimate liberation. It's all based on a wide variety of stories—some ancient, such as that of Pralad and Nachiketa, and some more recent, such as that of Surdas, the 15th-century blind musician, and Harihara Raya and Bukka Raya, founders in 1336 of the Vijayanagar Empire.

### The Episodes

Most stories start with a narrator and one or more characters on a theater stage talking about the coming story. It's an effective technique, one that is woven throughout the series. This narrative prologue then pans to

a nearby scene on the stage and then suddenly to an actual location in a forest, city or village. At a critical point the narrator may appear again on the stage, and then we are shifted back to a location or full-fledged set. From time to time—in the style of a Greek theater "chorus"—other characters appear in the scene with the actors but do not interact with them. Rather they talk to each other or the audience, offering insights into what is



going on. Overall, it is a clever mix of theater, cinema and television staging.

Our reviewer watched half of the 54 episodes for this evaluation—and that having to depend on the English subtitles, missing what has been reviewed by others as the elegant Hindi dialogue.

Both the series and the staging concepts are developed in the first episodes, in which the son of a traditional pandit finds, contrary to his expectations, that his career and aspirations in theater have much in common with his father's life. The second episode involves scenes from the end of the Mahabharata war. It must be said that these two episodes are not the most engaging.

The series finds its stride with the next episode, "Knowledge Transforms," based on the famed story of encounter of highway robber Ratnakar with Sage Narada. The sage asks if the thief's family—who know his occupation—were willing to share in his karma of robbing and killing. Shocked to find out that none were, he renounced the world, attained liberation and became the famed Sage Valmiki, author of the *Ramayana*.

Episode 11, on the goal of *kama*, pleasure, is based on the story of King Bhartrihari. He is living a self-indulgent life in the company of his wives and the palace women when a brahmin offers him a magic mango which



**Series snapshots:** (clockwise from bottom left) Swami Tejomananda, head of Chinmaya Mission; Series poster; episode 40 explores the Hindu theory of creation through the story of 6th-century scientist Varahamihira of Ujjain; King Bhartrihari offered the magic mango in episode 11; "Theory of Karma and Rebirth," the story of Chitraketu from *Shrimad Bhagavatam*; the jester and the narrator introduce Chitraketu's story; director Chandraprakash Dwivedi



ALL PHOTOS: CHINMAYA MISSION

will allow whoever eats it to stay young forever. He gives it to his favorite wife, who gives it to her secret lover, who gives it to his mistress, and so on, until it arrives in the hands of another of the king's wives—who offers it to him, catalyzing in him a rude awakening about the nature of human desire.

Some episodes, such as 15, on the third ashrama of retired life, draw on stories that are a bit of a stretch. In this case, it is that of King Dhritarashtra, who lost the Mahabharata war. According to the episode, he is daily taunted by the boasts of Bhima (of the victorious Pandavas) telling how he had personally dispatched several of the king's sons on the battlefield. To escape Bhima's taunts, the king understandably retires to the forest. One might think, however, that entering the third ashrama should be brought about by a spiritual desire to withdraw from the world, not to escape a determined tormentor.

Three of the most entertaining sets of episodes are those on the 16 samskaras. These utilize the devotional song by Surdas which tells of Lord Krishna receiving the rites of passage—replete with Bollywood dance numbers.

### The Production Team

Dwivedi, 54, the linchpin of the production, brings to it his considerable talent as a director and actor along with his deep interest in

history. The son of a Sanskrit teacher, he was first educated as a doctor. Around 1990 he pursued his interest in the performing arts, considering cinema but then choose television instead. He is best known for *Chanakya*, for which he personally researched the life and times of the 4th-century political theorist and author of *Artha Shastra*. For *Upanishad Ganga*, he worked closely with the Chinmaya Mission acharyas and co-writer Farid Khan in developing the script for each episode. The actors include many of note: Abhimanyu Singh (who, besides narrating the series, plays in several episodes), K. K. Raina, Zakir Hussain, Amit Behl, Mukesh Ti-



wari, Jaya Bhattacharya, Huma Qureshi and Seema Azmi.

### Evaluation and Recommendations

The series perspective is that of Vedanta, drawing mostly on the *Upanishads*, and to a lesser extent on the bhakti traditions. At times the expansive discourse on deep topics can lose the viewer, as the actors try and inexorably fail to explain the unexplainable mysteries of God and His creation.

Parents are advised this is not a children's series. Some of the scenes are very rough—Bhima's taunting of King Dhritarashtra, for one. Several episodes involve learned scholars being killed after losing a debate, which might well raise questions from today's youth. Others would require explanations a parent might not wish to get into—such as Saint Arunagirinathar spending much of his earlier life in a brothel. Judicious previewing is called for in a home or class situation.

Overall, the series is highly professional, with excellent writing, staging, acting and cinematography. It showed on Doordarshan in 2012–2013 and is now playing on the international channel DD India. Available on YouTube in Hindi and on DVD from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) in Hindi with English subtitles. Highly recommended as a compellingly visual way to introduce Indian philosophy and history to a new audience.





YOUTH

# The Journey Begins

How a visit to a temple magically turned one twelve-year-old's embarrassment for Hinduism into an outspoken pride in her faith

BY DEVINA DEVAGHARAN

IT IS NOT EASY BEING A HINDU, ESPECIALLY when you are twelve and you live in Texas. Even more difficult is being a Hindu and being home-schooled. Worse than that is when you're the only Hindu among all your home-schooled friends, who are devout Christians. Imagine this: Out of the hundreds of Christian kids with fair skin, I stick out like a sore thumb thanks to being the only Hindu girl with dark chocolate skin. People say: "Being different is awesome!" Well not in my case! I've been embarrassed to be a Hindu. There, I said it, and I admit it. I always thought that my friends would laugh at me if I told them I was born a Hindu. As a home-schooler surrounded by Christian friends, I was uneasy and ungrateful towards Hinduism. I was the kid that didn't belong.

I constantly struggle being a Hindu kid growing up in America. I'm more of a follower, and not a leader. Some of my Hindu friends are like that as well. My parents, who were raised in Malaysia, had it easy. My mother has told me many times that when I was younger, around 4 or 5 years old, I constantly wished that I had fairer skin, blond hair, blue eyes and an American name to blend in with my friends.

Hinduism has always been confusing to me. Too many Gods, too many arms, too many weapons, too many festivals and too many names. How's a twelve-year-old going to understand all of this? How can I even begin to explain it to my friends? Imagine explaining about Lord Ganesha. I'd be embarrassed to tell them that I pray to an elephant that sometimes has many heads and rides on a special rat! I can imagine the stares and laughter that would accompany that statement. As much as I hate to say it, I have to admit that it was odd praying to an animal that represents God. Why do we pray to animals? Is it true that Ganesha travels on a rat? Can the rat really carry such a huge and obese Ganesha? Why are Hindu Gods always walking around with weapons? Some do look pretty scary. My friends are devout Christians and sometimes they quote the Bible or add a fact about Christianity in their conversations with me. I am constantly amazed at how much they know about their religion. I wished that I could talk about my religion fluently and confidently, but I honestly knew very little about Hinduism.

I had so many questions and very few answers. My parents did their best, but I wished I could get the answers straight from the teachers or masters themselves. I did not want to listen to the watered-down version. I needed real answers. Like when you want to learn to play the piano, you would seek out a renowned piano teacher. It is the same way with other subjects and master teachers. Why do Hindus wear a bindi? If it is the third eye, why is there no vision? What is vibhuti? Why on our forehead? Why can't you wear shoes



into the temple? Why do Lord Siva, Ganesha and Muruga have so many forms and names? Why can't there be just one for each? As a kid, I have a hard time memorizing history and science vocabulary, imagine adding to that the Hindu Gods' many, many, many names and forms? Well, my trip to Kauai this past year answered a lot of my questions and has brought me so much closer to my birth religion that now I am actually proud of being a Hindu. I know the answers now, and there is a ton of logic that accompanies the answers to each of my questions. This trip was my family's third visit to Kauai. My parents came here when they were newlyweds in 1999 and brought me here in 2006. I hardly remember anything from that trip except that all the swamis had long beards—fascinating to me as a five-year-old. The 2013 trip was not like any vacation my family and I have had before. I shuddered when my parents told me that all our awake time would be spent at the temple! Pray on vacation? Who does that? Gone were my plans to zip-line! My parents made it clear that whatever zip-lining to be done would be to the temple and back. My expectations for this trip fortunately changed from bad to great the minute we walked into the temple that Wednesday morning. From the way the people in Kauai live, to the atmosphere at the temple, everything was so different from back home. In Texas, all day long everybody says, "What's next on my list?" In Kauai, everybody says, "I'm going to the beach." In Texas, even on free days, we aren't really free and there's always something to do or somewhere to go to. The vibrations and energy at the Kadavul Temple are so different from the temple that I visit in Texas. The vibrations at the temple are positive, and I felt very calm and peaceful. The monks here spent a lot of time with us and took us around the temple grounds. There were so many things that I learned about Hinduism when I was here that would otherwise have taken me a lifetime to understand.

I'm glad I got to spend a whole week at the temple just to focus on my religion. I was beginning to understand Hinduism. I learned so much that I felt like a completely new kid. The way I thought about Hinduism changed, and the way I felt about Hinduism changed as a result. I now understand the true forms of all of our Gods and the many mystical animals that accompany them. Besides learning Hinduism in Kauai, I received a well-needed course on how to eat healthy and exercise physically and mentally. I also ate greens that I never knew existed! They tasted pretty good, too! So many wonderful people and experiences happened that inspired changes in me. So many sensational feelings blended together and created the greatest time of my life. I always looked on the outside of things, and never on the inside. For me, the temple was the eraser and Texas was the pen-



HINDUISM TODAY

cil. In Texas I messed up so much, from not learning Hinduism properly, to not praying to God at all, and being ungrateful to Hinduism. When I arrived at the temple—or in this case, the eraser—it was able to erase all the negativity and mistakes I had made before.

When I returned home to Texas, I started from scratch, picking up the pieces and putting them together correctly. This time, I could feel being a Hindu inside of me. The Kadavul Hindu Temple in Kauai and all of the swamis and the people that I met during my stay have really changed my perception towards Hinduism. This year my

**An unforgettable visit:** (from top) Kadavul temple with Nandi, Siva's bull, outside; Devina and her parents have darshan with Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami



New Year's resolution is to crack out of my shell and start climbing the mountain. That means that I'm going to stop being ungrateful and shy about being a Hindu. I am proud and confident of my heritage, culture and religion. Climbing up the mountain will be a challenge, but I have to start from the bottom and work my way up to the top! I'm practicing more Hinduism now, and the Ten-Minute Spiritual Workout by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami is exactly what I needed. Meeting him was a truly special part of this trip. I am grateful to Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami for gifting me *The History of Hindu India* which will be my main social studies book for this year. I also appreciate the beautiful pair of rudraksha earrings that I wear proudly. I appreciate Sannyasin Saravananathaswami spending all of his time with us while on tour.

Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity to share my experiences with all of the Hindu youth out there who are struggling with the same issues that I have experienced. I am grateful for the Kadavul temple and look forward to the Iraivan temple and am blessed that I am able to watch it grow. I enjoyed meeting the cows and what an exciting experience it was trying to feed them. I loved spending time with all of the Hindu ladies helping at the temple's gift shop.

I feel a change in myself, and I know I will continue to grow in Hinduism and be a great Hindu. I am so grateful that my parents worked hard to make this trip materialize. I arrived in Kauai with many questions and trepidations about my birth religion, but it was the right time in my life. Lord Siva was waiting for us. I know this journey has only just begun, but I am excited and looking forward to the many explorations ahead. I am counting the days until I return to the Kadavul temple. Most importantly, I'm proud to be a Hindu, and I hope you are too!

DEVINA DEVAGHARAN, 12, lives in Euless, Texas, with her parents Devagharan Nair and Kumari Nallakumar. She is home schooled and enjoys chess, playing the piano, drawing and writing.





## Rescuing the Source of Life: Water

The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance brings religious leaders together to hasten urgently needed projects for clean water, sanitation and hygiene

**D**ESPITE CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL effort to meet targets set in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, roughly 2.5 billion people remain without basic sanitation services; half of these people live in India and China. Progress on increasing access to clean water has been improving and is actually proceeding ahead of schedule, but a large proportion of humanity remains without an easily accessible clean water source. Fatal diseases caused by lack of sanitation are highly skewed towards children, with roughly 1,600 children dying each day due to diarrhea-related problems. This is where the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA, [giwaconference2013.org](http://giwaconference2013.org)) comes in.

Launched at UNICEF in New York City last September, GIWA brings together representatives of most of the world's faith traditions to "save lives by accelerating and intensifying water, sanitation and hygiene projects worldwide." This will be done in a practical sense by "teaching Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS, [www.communityledtotalsanitation.org](http://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org)) while also improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) training and services."

Representing Hinduism within this alliance of interfaith and civil society groups is Ganga Action Parivar ([www.gangaaction.org](http://www.gangaaction.org)), the environmental coalition founded by Swami Chidanand Saraswati, head of Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh ([www.parmarth.com](http://www.parmarth.com)). Ganga Action Parivar focuses on reducing the staggering pollution flowing into the River Ganga.

Speaking with HINDUISM TODAY, Muniji (as Swamiji is known) says, "Here in India, our work has already begun. In the aftermath of the tragic floods of Uttarakhand's Himalayas, the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance saw that far too many people were sick and dying because of resulting poor water conditions. Our workers in the field took action, delivering water purification tablets and filters and teaching populations about the crucial importance of drinking uncontaminated water. We have also started working in schools to teach children proper hand washing, for by simply washing one's hands, so many diseases can be prevented. Moreover, we are working to build eco-friendly toilets in schools and to provide



**Residents resigned:** A polluted canal in a Chennai neighborhood during the monsoon

households and travelers with access to eco-friendly toilets as well. In such a way, our environment will be cleaner, lives and health will be protected, and the dignity of women and girls will also be safeguarded."

Community-Led Total Sanitation is the policy cornerstone of this project. Started in

defecation-free villages."

The clear challenge here, not unique to GIWA, is taking the momentum of the program launch and transforming it into practical, community-level action. Muniji explains how the world's religious leaders are in a unique position to help in bringing about the sort of practical changes required here: "Since the dawn of history, faith has provided a foundation from which social norms develop," Muniji explains. "It is to faith leaders that billions are drawn in times of joy and sorrow, as well as in the search for inner meaning.

As teachers to the masses, the words of faith leaders inspire, motivate, guide and enable. Through their words and actions, they can bring about change in ways that others, quite simply, cannot."

By Mat McDermott

"Of this universe, it is in truth the waters that were made first. Hence, when the waters flow, then everything here, whatsoever exists, is produced."

—Shatapata Brahmana

2000 in rural Bangladesh and now implemented in 50 countries, CLTS "focuses on the behavioral changes needed to ensure real and sustainable improvements. It invests in community mobilization instead of hardware and shifts the focus from toilet construction for individual households to the creation of open

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# Hindu Heritage Endowment

WHY THE ALL-IMPORTANT WILL IS ONLY ONE PART  
OF YOUR COMPLETE ESTATE PLANNING PACKAGE



As a woman leaves her physical body at the moment of her Great Departure, she is received by her guardian devas in her astral body. She is happy that her personal and financial affairs are properly settled, thanks to the estate planning tool kit that advised and guided her.

Despite the limitations imposed on wills listed above, and other as well, such as costs, delay, and wills' public nature, nonetheless, a will is a blessing for a family who would otherwise watch helplessly as the court distributes their loved one's estate according to an impersonal formula that might have little to do with the decedent's wishes. This is why a will is usually the first document people think of when drafting an estate plan. Even so, 58 percent of adult Americans don't have one according to a new survey from lawyers.com. Here are two other interesting statistics from the survey's findings:

- 18 percent of Americans experience problems due to a lack of, or a flawed, estate plan, after the death or incapacitation of a loved one.
- nearly eight percent of Americans without an estate plan say they do not have one because they do not want to think about dying or incapacity.

Most attorneys encourage their clients to consider a living trust, a power of attorney for property management, an advance health care directive and a will. These are all topics covered in our Estate Planning Tool Kit. Strengthen your family's future and continue to support Kauai's Hindu Monastery by requesting your Estate Planning Tool Kit today. Contact Shanmuganathaswami at 808-822-3012, x 244 or write to [hhe@hindu.org](mailto:hhe@hindu.org) to receive it by e-mail • Learn more about estate planning and planned giving at [www.hheonline.org](http://www.hheonline.org).



## HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

**KAUAI'S HINDU MONASTERY**, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA  
808-822-3012 ext 244 • fax: 808-822-3152 • [hhe@hindu.org](mailto:hhe@hindu.org) • [www.hheonline.org](http://www.hheonline.org)

With fuel and food prices sky high, it's natural for a family to think about its future financial security. The last place you might think to look for help in such matters is a Hindu monastery. But, in addition to spiritual direction, monasteries around the world offer practical guidance to help stabilize society during changing times. Many of you have supported Kauai's Hindu Monastery for years, and we in turn are available to help. That is one reason we are happy to provide a free, clear and sound Estate Planning Tool Kit.

A good estate plan will not make high prices lower. But it will protect your family from unnecessary court costs, attorney fees and taxes.

One of the most basic but misunderstood estate planning tools is the will. Many people think a will avoids probate, the costly court process that supervises the distribution of wealth to others at death. No, probate cannot be avoided. Your will is a ticket to probate court. Think of your will as a letter to the judge, telling him or her who gets your estate. The judge supervises distribution following your will, making sure the right people get the right things.

Some think the executor of their will can step in and manage their assets if they are too ill to do so themselves. This is not so either. The executor has no power until after the maker of the will has passed on. Some think wills can direct who gets everything they own. Not so. Some assets such as life insurance and retirement plans indicate who gets what through their own beneficiary designations. Wills cannot simply overriwde these designations.

Other as well, such as costs, delay, and wills' public nature, nonetheless, a will is a blessing for a family who would otherwise watch helplessly as the court distributes their loved one's estate according to an impersonal formula that might have little to do with the decedent's wishes. This is why a will is usually the first document people think of when drafting an estate plan. Even so, 58 percent of adult Americans don't have one according to a new survey from lawyers.com. Here are two other interesting statistics from the survey's findings:

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## OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	366.36
Rajendra Giri	110.00
Dheeraj Handa	101.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Suresh & Meena Joshi	101.00
Gayatri Rajan	100.00
Other Donations	75,163.10
Total	76,316.46

<b>Iraivan Temple Endowment</b>	
Ram & Kalpana Batni	25.00
Frank Burkhardt	20.00
Anonymous	2,508.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	100.00
Dheeraj Handa	303.00
Victoria Lynne Johnson	11.00
Manickam & Thaiya Krishnamurthy	25.00
Bhupesh Patel	1,008.00
Gayatri Rajan	50.00
Alex Ruberto	324.00
Anurag & Prachee Sharma	1,001.00
Other Donations	76,111.88
Total	81,486.88

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund</b>	
Anonymous	357.71
Peter Tracy Balogh	141.00
Hemakshsha Naatha Batumallah	17.00
Mekaladeva Batumallah	17.00
Darlene Bolesny	20.00
Visen Candasamy	32.26
Victoria Lynne Johnson	11.00
Juhivaasana Koothan	9.84
Anil Kumar	18.00
Punithavathi Kuppusamy	20.00
Suguna Kutty	139.08
Saroja Devi Manickam	2.50
Bhaveshan Moorgben	9.84
Shanda Kumaran Moorgben	9.84
Udayadeva Moorgben	9.84
Jogendra Moorooogen	3.25
Vidyadevi Moorooogen	3.25
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98
Tavish Periatnamby	131.15
Hemavalli Sivalingam	2.79
Javanya Skanda	23.18
Total	1,088.51

<b>Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund</b>	
Anonymous	499.00
Nalini Chenganna	227.65
Carole Kahn	120.00
Prakash Krishna	499.00
Annu Maheshwari	499.00
Dayavati Murugan	50.00
Anjeeni Devi Peruman	32.26
Kirtideva Peruman	29.52
Niroshnee Peruman	34.44
Alex Ruberto	108.00
Anurag & Prachee Sharma	499.00
Sai Singh	120.00
Logavalli Sinsamy	68.86
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	117.08
Potriyan Sivanathan	18.61
Bala Soobramanien	58.84
Total	2,981.26

<b>Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund</b>	
Vel Mahalingum	19.68
Manogaran Mardemootoo	0.26
Total	19.94

<b>Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	1,674.00
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	24.00
Umasankaran Mohambourame	251.00
Gowri Nadason	166.63
Parimala Selvaraj	93.00
Bala Sivaceyon	40.00
Total	2,248.63

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund</b>	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	22.00
Kulagan Moonesawmy	19.68
Carmen Debora Murbach	150.00
Gowri Nadason	166.63
Toshadevi Nataraj	120.00
Barathy Sockanathan	46.26
Anonymous	100.00
Vayudeva Varadan	72.00

Other Donations	4,800.00
Total	5,496.57

<b>Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam</b>	
Manickam & Thaiya Krishnamurthy	25.00
Aran Sendan	100.00
Anonymous	258.36
Total	383.36

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	108.00

<b>Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund</b>	
Anonymous	324.00

<b>Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund</b>	
Anonymous	900.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Aran Sendan	100.00
Total	1,050.00

<b>Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment</b>	
Michael R. Eisen	25.00
Alfiya Khasanova	70.00
Mano Navaratnarajah	75.00
Anonymous	216.36
Total	386.36

<b>Hinduism Today Production Fund</b>	
Ron & Jennifer Burke	150.00
Krishan Chawla	2,000.00
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	250.00
Anonymous	138.17
P.C. Ghosh	90.00
Hiranya Gowda	93.00
Mahendra Jagirdar	200.00
Raj & Deepa Maturi	500.00
Arun J. Mehta	918.28
Murli Melwani	2,500.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Sakuntalai Periasamy	60.70
Gayatri Rajan	50.00
Surendra & Patsy Rajpal	250.01
Muni Laxmi & Jai Ram Reddy	25.00
Vijay & Vijayanti Ruikar	1,001.00
Chamundi Sabanathan	364.00
Deochan Sanichar	20.00
Akharaju V S Sarma	500.00
Arvind Sharma	20.72
Rameshwar & Shanti Singh	251.00
Ganga Sivanathan	516.00
Total	9,947.89

<b>Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Roshan Harilela	375.00
Alex Ruberto	100.00
Rodney & Ilene Standen	30.00
Matthew Wiczork	10.00
Anonymous	198.36
Total	763.36

<b>Hindu Education Endowment</b>	
Hasu N. & Hansa H. Patel	100.00

<b>The Kautilya Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	10,000.00

<b>Suntheram Family Trust Fund</b>	
Ramachandran Suntheram	2,500.00

<b>Hindu Press International Endowment Fund</b>	
Anonymous	51.00
Hiranya Gowda	63.00
Total	114.00

<b>Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund</b>	
Mano Navaratnarajah	225.00
Gassa Patten	1,350.00
Total	1,575.00

<b>Saiva Agamas Trust</b>	
Ganga Sivanathan	210.00

<b>Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment</b>	
Anil Kumar	18.00

<b>Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund</b>	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	22.00

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund</b>	
Rajadeva Alahan	153.00

<b>A. Saravanapavan Family Murugan Temple Pillaiyar Shrine Fund</b>	
Michael R. Eisen	25.00
Upendra & Smita Kulkarni	500.00
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00
Anonymous	108.36
Total	783.36

<b>Thank You Bodhinatha Fund</b>	
Hotranatha Ajaya	33.00
Eleni Cannon	237.00
Elizabeth H. Crockett	108.00
Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00
Anonymous	1,204.35
Rajani Dinavahi	250.00
Debashis Ghosh	300.00
Haran Kandadas	108.00
Alfiya Khasanova	416.00
Meeravadee Koothan	16.39
Dasan Mahadevan	108.00
Shanti Momtaz	100.00
Kulagan Moonesawmy	16.39
Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00
Janaka Param	108.00
Rama Pemmaraju Rao	108.00
Alex Ruberto	60.00
Aran Sambandar	162.00
Tejasinha Sivalingam	11.76
Ramesh Sivanathan	31.00
Soma Sundaram	50.00
Devi Tandavan	108.00
Anba Dayananden Valayten	12.78
Vayudeva Varadan	84.00
Michael Wasylkiw	648.00
Total	4,754.67

<b>Udayan Care Endowment Fund</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Anonymous	108.36
Total	158.36

<b>Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired</b>	
Alex Ruberto	80.00

<b>Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Shyamal Chandra Debnath	50.00
Anonymous	10.00
Total	110.00

<b>Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund</b>	
Pathmini Saravanapavan	150.00

<b>Manitha Neyam Trust Fund</b>	
Bala Sivaceyon	30.00

<b>Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage</b>	
Michael R. Eisen	25.00
Anonymous	108.36
Michael Zimmermann	6.00
Total	139.36

<b>Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Suhashini Muniandy	45.00
Saurabh Pathak	50.00
Anonymous	108.36
Total	253.36

<b>Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00
Somaja Pradeep	150.00
Anonymous	108.36
Total	308.36

<b>Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	150.00

<b>Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund</b>	
Murali Balaji	151.00
Hiranya Gowda	153.00
Rajagopal Krishnan	40.00
Michael Zimmermann	6.00
Total	350.00

<b>Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund</b>	
Shyamadeva Dandapani	22.00

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund</b>	
Rajendra Giri	110.00

Victoria Lynne Johnson	3.00
Total	113.00

<b>Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	909.86
Eleni Cannon	108.00
Marlene Carter	108.00
Sasikumar Darmalingam	10.00
Michael R. Eisen	25.00
Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01
Ganga Sivanathan	150.00
Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan	150.00
Andrew Stich	300.00
Soma Sundaram	15.00
Total	1,717.87

<b>Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund</b>	
Anonymous	873.36
Sasikumar Darmalingam	30.00
Canaganayagam Kugendra	20.00
Muni Laxmi & Jai Ram Reddy	25.00
Total	948.36

<b>Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund</b>	
Ken Kanagalingam	121.00
Vayudeva Varadan	72.00
Total	193.00

<b>Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund</b>	
Hiranya Gowda	99.00
Manogaran Mardemootoo	0.53
Kulagan Moonesawmy	19.68
Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00
Ganga Sivanathan	300.00
Total	479.21

<b>Hindu American Foundation Endowment</b>	
Subhash Kumar Choudhary	50.00

<b>Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment</b>	
Anonymous	355.86
Elizabeth H. Crockett	21.08
Rajendra Giri	110.00
Dheeraj Handa	63.00
Alfiya Khasanova	35.00
Natray Narayanswami	22.00
Toshadevi Nataraj	30.00
Kartikatipani Ramachandran	10.00
Muni Laxmi & Jai Ram Reddy	25.00
Total	671.94

<b>Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund</b>	
Sanjay Dahya	30.29
Anil Kumar	18.00
Total	48.29

<b>Panchangam Endowment Fund</b>	
Chellappa Deva	25.00

<b>Digital Dharma Endowment</b>	
Chellappa Deva	25.00
Anonymous	350.00
Shama Vinayaga	457.01
Total	832.01

<b>Insurance Premiums</b>	
Mrunal Patel	3,003.00

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b>	
Other Donations	600.00

<b>Total Contributions</b>	
	\$213,372.37

<b>Funds at Market Value, Dec 31, 2013</b>	
<b>Total Endowment Funds \$12,802,344.57</b>	

Grand Total	\$12,802,344.57
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**MISSION STATEMENT:** Hindu Heritage Endowment is a publicly supported, charitable organization recognized as tax exempt by the IRS on April 22, 1994. Employer ID 99-0308924. Founded by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, its philanthropic mission is to provide secure, professionally managed financial support for institutions and religious leaders of all lineages of Sanatana Dharma.





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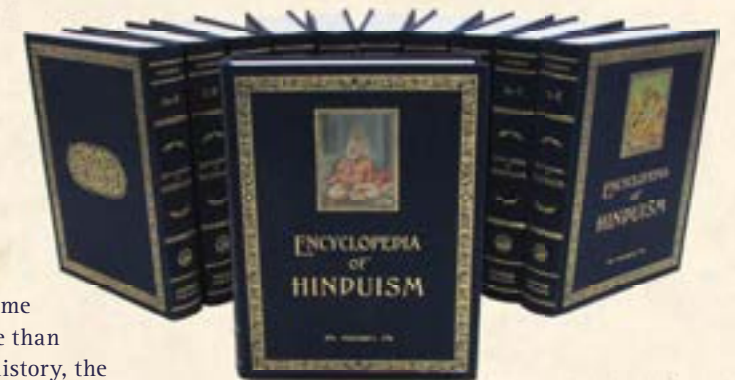
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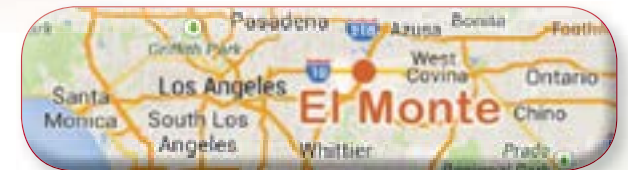
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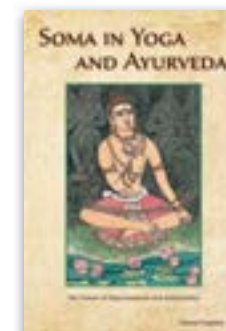
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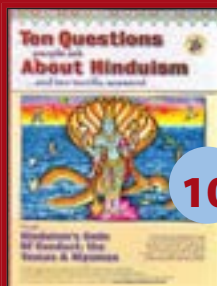
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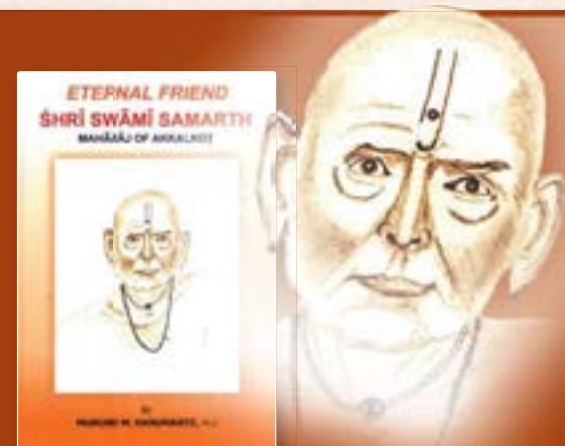
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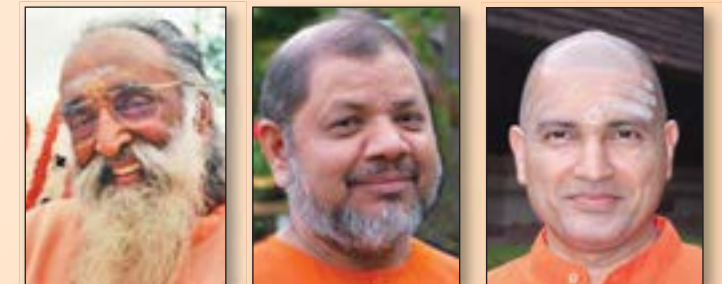
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# DIGITAL DHARMA

INTERNET SECURITY

## Free Content Filtering with OpenDNS

**P**ROTECTING DHARMA IN AN INTERNET page, keeping a pure mind, faces serious challenges from unfiltered content and vulnerabilities in personal information and security. There is much that can be found on the Web today that is cruel, erotic, dangerous and morally wrong. The bottom line is that, as long as you are connected to the Internet, there is no way to be fully protected. That poses serious concerns for dharmic-minded parents who wish to limit their families' exposure, or for the company CEO who hopes to protect his network's security—or simply filter his employees' potential distractions.

According to the [symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com) 2012 *Internet Security Threat Report, Volume 17*, global Internet hacks breached more than 232.4 million identities throughout 2011 (the 2013 hack on the Target Corporation alone was over 110 million). The report also showed that about 69% of all emails are spam and that the number of phishing sites—posing as social networking sites to steal your login information—had increased by 125%. According to a *BBC* report in June, 2013, an estimated four percent of all Internet sites are related to pornography—no where near the 37% estimate often seen, but four percent of the estimated billion-plus sites is still a lot.

Thankfully there are some free and easy solutions, one of which is OpenDNS—a global system that is constantly updating and evolving itself to ensure that you and your family, company or organization can have as much protection as possible.

For those unaware, DNS stands for "Domain Name System," and your Internet con-

nection is already using the DNS service offered by your Internet Service Provider (ISP). In actuality, all websites are identified as numbers, and the DNS is responsible for replacing a domain's name—[www.hinduismtoday.com](http://www.hinduismtoday.com), for example—with its number. This ensures that you don't have to remember eleven digits each time you want to visit a web page. These vast lists of website names are stored by individual companies, such as Network Solutions, LLC, who maintains the list of all ".com" domains. When you type in a web address, your request goes through your ISP-provided DNS server, which gets the corresponding number from the DNS master list and sends you to the correct website.

What your default DNS service does not do is distinguish which websites are potentially harmful and which are not—leave aside offering customized protection. That's where OpenDNS steps in. Having taken Internet security to the root level, it allows you customized options for your desired level of security. The service is easy to use. Go here: [bit.ly/opendnshome](http://bit.ly/opendnshome), sign up for a free OpenDNS account and follow instructions.

According to your customized settings, the service will restrict pornographic and dangerous content, protecting your home or company's network from inappropriate sites, malware, phishing scams and data theft. As a side benefit, it may increase your browser's speed by processing page requests faster than your ISP's DNS service.

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**Simple and secure:** (clockwise from top) The OpenDNS website; the service helps to protect your family from inappropriate websites and scams; it has customized options for whatever level of security you'd like.

OpenDNS offers a remarkable paid service called Umbrella which extends security wherever you connect your laptop and adds mobile Internet devices such as iPhones and iPads—with highly granular configurability via a central web dashboard. OpenDNS's suite of services is a boon for parents wanting to keep unsavory influences out of the home as well as helpful for organizations wanting to shield company-issued devices from network security breaches and other unauthorized use.

